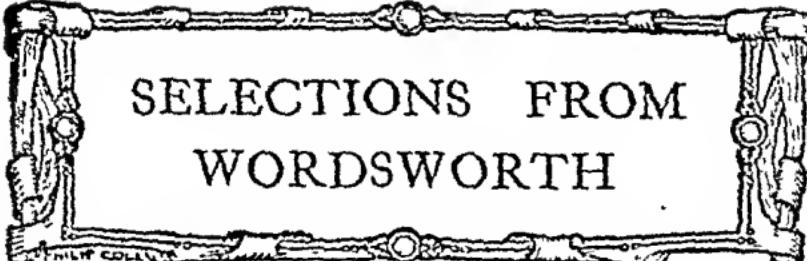


amends. Sir Walter Raleigh's *Wordsworth* is one of the best books ever written on any poet. There are excellent essays on Wordsworth in Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism: Second Series*, in Walter Pater's *Appreciations*, and in Dr. A. C. Bradley's *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*.





## SELECTIONS FROM WORDSWORTH

### PART I

#### LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

I HEARD a thousand blended notes,  
While in a grove I sate reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link  
The human soul that through me ran;  
And much it grieved my heart to think  
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,  
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;  
And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,  
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—  
But the least motion which they made  
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

## WORDSWORTH'S POEM

The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
 To catch the breezy air;  
 And I must think, do all I can,  
 That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
 If such be Nature's holy plan,  
 Have I not reason to lament  
 What man has made of man?

(1798)

## TO MY SISTER

IT is the first mild day of March:  
 Each minute sweeter than before  
 The redbreast sings from the tall larch  
 That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air,  
 Which seems a sense of joy to yield  
 To the bare trees, and mountains bare,  
 And grass in the green field.

My sister! ('tis a wish of mine)  
 Now that our morning meal is done,  
 Make haste, your morning task resign;  
 Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you;—and, pray,  
 Put on with speed your woodland dress;  
 And bring no book: for this one day  
 We'll give to idleness.

No joyless forms shall regulate  
Our living calendar:  
We from to-day, my Friend, will date  
The opening of the year.

'Love, now a universal birth,  
From heart to heart is stealing,  
From earth to man, from man to earth:  
—It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more  
Than years of toiling reason:  
Our minds shall drink at every pore  
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,  
Which they shall long obey:  
We for the year to come may take  
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls  
About, below, above,  
We'll frame the measure of our souls:  
They shall be tuned to love.

Then come, my Sister! come, I pray,  
With speed put on your woodland dress;  
And bring no book: for this one day  
We'll give to idleness.

## MATTHEW

## I

IF Nature, for a favourite child,  
 In thee hath tempered so her clay,  
 That every hour thy heart runs wild,  
 Yet never once doth go astray,

Read o'er these lines; and then review  
 This tablet, that thus humbly rears  
 In such diversity of hue  
 Its history of two hundred years.

—When through this little wreck of fame  
 Cipher and syllable! thine eye  
 Has travelled down to Matthew's name,  
 Pause with no common sympathy.

And, if a sleeping tear should wake,  
 Then be it neither checked nor stayed:  
 For Matthew a request I make  
 Which for himself he had not made.

Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,  
 Is silent as a standing pool;  
 Far from the chimney's merry roar,  
 And murmur of the village school.

The sighs which Matthew heaved were sighs  
Of one tired out with fun and madness;  
The tears which came to Matthew's eyes  
Were tears of light, the dew of gladness.

Yet, sometimes, when the secret cup  
Of still and serious thought went round,  
He seemed as if he drank it up—  
He felt with spirit so profound.

—Thou soul of God's best earthly mould!  
Thou happy Soul! and can it be  
That these two words of glittering gold  
Are all that must remain of thee?

{1799}

## II

### THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS

WE walked along, while bright and red  
Uprose the morning sun;  
And Matthew stopped, he looked, and said,  
“ The will of God be done! ”

A village schoolmaster was he,  
With hair of glittering grey;  
As blithe a man as you could see  
On a spring holiday.

And on that morning, through the grass,  
And by the steaming rills,  
We travelled merrily, to pass  
A day among the hills.

"Our work," said I, "was well begun,  
Then, from thy breast what thought,  
Beneath so beautiful a sun,  
So sad a sigh has brought?"

A second time did Matthew stop:  
And fixing still his eye  
Upon the eastern mountain-top,  
To me he made reply:

"Yon cloud with that long purple cleft  
Brings fresh into my mind  
A day like this which I have left  
Full thirty years behind.

"And just above yon slope of corn  
Such colours, and no other,  
Were in the sky, that April morn,  
Of this the very brother.

"With rod and line I sued the sport  
Which that sweet season gave,  
And, to the churchyard come, stopped short  
Beside my daughter's grave.

" Nine summers had she scarcely seen,  
The pride of all the vale;  
And then she sang;—she would have been  
A very nightingale.

" Six feet in earth my Emma lay;  
And yet I loved her more,  
For so it seemed, than till that day  
I e'er had loved before.

" And, turning from her grave, I met,  
Beside the churchyard yew,  
A blooming Girl, whose hair was wet  
With points of morning dew.

" A basket on her head she bare;  
Her brow was smooth and white:  
To see a child so very fair,  
It was a pure delight!

" No fountain from its rocky cave  
E'er tripped with foot so free;  
She seemed as happy as a wave  
That dances on the sea.

" There came from me a sigh of pain  
Which I could ill confine;  
I looked at her, and looked again:  
And did not wish her mine!"

Matthew is in his grave, yet now,  
 Methinks, I see him stand,  
 As at that moment, with a bough  
 Of wilding in his hand.

(1790)

## III

## EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY

" Why, William, on that old grey stone,  
 Thus for the length of half a day,  
 Why, William, sit you thus alone,  
 And dream your time away ?

" Where are your books? — that light be-  
 queathed  
 To Beings else forlorn and blind!  
 Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed  
 From dead men to their kind.

" You look round on your Mother Earth,  
 As if she for no purpose bore you;  
 As if you were her first-born birth,  
 And none had lived before you! "

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,  
 When life was sweet, I knew not why,  
 To me my good friend Matthew spake,  
 And thus I made reply:

" The eye—it cannot choose but see;  
We cannot bid the ear be still;  
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,  
Against or with our will.

" Nor less I deem that there are Powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress;  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.

" Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum  
Of things for ever speaking,  
That nothing of itself will come,  
But we must still be seeking?

" —Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,  
Conversing as I may,  
I sit upon this old grey stone,  
And dream my time away."

## IV

## THE TABLES TURNED

## AN EVENING SCENE ON THE SAME SUBJECT

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;  
Or surely you'll grow double:  
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;  
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,  
 A freshening lustre mellow  
 Through all the long green fields has spread,  
 His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:  
 Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
 How sweet his music! on my life,  
 There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
 'He, too, is no mean preacher:  
 'Come forth into the light of things,  
 Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,  
 Our minds and hearts to bless—  
 Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
 Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood  
 May teach you more of man,  
 Of moral evil and of good,  
 Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;  
 Our meddling intellect  
 Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:  
 We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;  
Close up those barren leaves;  
Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
That watches and receives.

(1798)

"AMONG ALL LOVELY THINGS MY LOVE  
HAD BEEN"

AMONG all lovely things my Love had been;  
Had noted well the stars, all flowers that grew  
About her home; but she had never seen  
A glow-worm, never one, and this I knew.

While riding near her home one stormy night  
A single glow-worm did I chance to espy;  
I gave a fervent welcome to the sight,  
And from my horse I leapt; great joy had I.

Upon a leaf the glow-worm did I lay,  
To bear it with me through the stormy night:  
And, as before, it shone without dismay;  
Albeit putting forth a fainter light.

When to the dwelling of my Love I came,  
I went into the orchard quietly;  
And left the glow-worm, blessing it by name,  
Laid safely by itself, beneath a tree.

The whole next day, I hoped, and hoped with fear;  
 At night the glow-worm shone beneath the tree;  
 I led my Lucy to the spot, "Look here,"  
 Oh! joy it was for her, and joy for me!

(1802)

LUCY<sup>1</sup>

## I

STRANGE fits of passion have I known:  
 And I will dare to tell,  
 But in the Lover's ear alone,  
 What once to me befell.

When she I loved looked every day  
 Fresh as a rose in June,  
 I to her cottage bent my way,  
 Beneath an evening-moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,  
 All over the wide lea;  
 With quickening pace my horse drew nigh  
 Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;  
 And, as we climbed the hill,  
 The sinking moon to Lucy's cot  
 Came near, and nearer still.

<sup>1</sup> Written in Germany in 1799.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,  
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!  
And all the while my eyes I kept  
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof  
He raised, and never stopped:  
When down behind the cottage roof,  
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide  
Into a Lover's head!  
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,  
"If Lucy should be dead!"

## II

She dwelt among the untrodden ways  
Beside the springs of Dove,  
A Maid whom there were none to praise  
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone  
Half hidden from the eye!  
—Fair as a star, when only one  
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know  
When Lucy ceased to be;  
But she is in her grave, and, oh,  
The difference to me!

## III

I travelled among unknown men,  
 In lands beyond the sea;  
 Nor, England! did I know till then  
 What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!  
 Nor will I quit thy shore  
 A second time; for still I seem  
 To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel  
 The joy of my desire;  
 And she I cherished turned her wheel  
 Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed  
 The bowers where Lucy played;  
 And thine too is the last green field  
 That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

## IV

Three years she grew in sun and shower,  
 Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower  
 On earth was never sown;  
 This Child I to myself will take;  
 She shall be mine, and I will make  
 A Lady of my own."

" Myself will to my darling be  
Both law and impulse: and with me  
The Girl, in rock and plain,  
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle or restrain.

" She shall be sportive as the fawn  
That wild with glee across the lawn,  
Or up the mountain springs;  
And her's shall be the breathing balm,  
And her's the silence and the calm  
Of mute insensate things.

" The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her; for her the willow bend;  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the Storm  
Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form  
By silent sympathy.

" The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face.

" And vital feelings of delight  
Shall rear her form to stately height,

Her virgin bosom swell;  
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give  
While she and I together live  
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—  
How soon my Lucy's race was run!  
She died, and left to me  
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;  
The memory of what has been,  
And never more will be.

## v

A slumber did my spirit seal;  
I had no human fears:  
She seemed a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;  
She neither hears nor sees;  
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,  
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

## BEGGARS

SHE had a tall man's height or more;  
Her face from summer's noon tide heat  
No bonnet shaded, but she wore  
A mantle, to her very feet  
Descending with a graceful flow,  
And on her head a cap as white as new-fallen snow.

Her skin was of Egyptian brown:  
Haughty, as if her eye had seen  
Its own light to a distance thrown,  
She towered, fit person for a Queen  
To lead those ancient Amazonian files;  
Or ruling Bandit's wife among the Grecian isles.

Advancing, forth she stretched her hand  
And begged an alms with doleful plea  
That ceased not; on our English land  
Such woes, I knew, could never be;  
And yet a boon I gave her, for the creature  
Was beautiful to see—a weed of glorious feature.

I left her, and pursued my way;  
And soon before me did espy  
A pair of little Boys at play,  
Chasing a crimson butterfly;  
The taller followed with his hat in hand,  
Wreathed round with yellow flowers the gayest of  
the land.

The other wore a rimless crown  
With leaves of laurel stuck about;  
And, while both followed up and down,  
Each whooping with a merry shout,  
In their fraternal features I could trace  
Unquestionable lines of that wild Suppliant's face.

Yet *they*, so blithe of heart, seemed fit  
For finest tasks of earth or air:  
Wings let them have, and they might slit  
Precursors to Aurora's car,  
Scattering fresh flowers; though happier far, I ween,  
To hunt their fluttering game o'er rock and level  
green.

They dart across my path—but lo,  
Each ready with a plaintive whine!  
Said I, “Not half an hour ago  
Your Mother has had alms of mine.”  
“That cannot be,” one answered—“she is  
dead:”—  
I looked reproof—they saw—but neither hung his  
head.

“She has been dead, Sir, many a day.”—  
“Hush, boys! you're telling me a lie;  
It was your Mother, as I say!”  
And, in the twinkling of an eye,  
“Come! come!” cried one, and without more ado,  
Off to some other play the joyous Vagrants flew!

## ANECDOTE FOR FATHERS

"*Retine vim istam, falsa enim dicam, si coges.*"—EUSEBIUS.

I HAVE a boy of five years old;  
His face is fair and fresh to see;  
His limbs are cast in beauty's mould,  
And dearly he loves me.

One morn we strolled on our dry walk,  
Our quiet home all full in view,  
And held such intermittent talk  
As we are wont to do.

My thoughts on former pleasures ran;  
I thought of Kilve's delightful shore,  
Our pleasant home when spring began,  
A long, long year before.

A day it was when I could bear  
Some fond regrets to entertain;  
With so much happiness to spare,  
I could not feel a pain.

The green earth echoed to the feet  
Of lambs that bounded through the glade,  
From shade to sunshine, and as fleet  
From sunshine back to shade.

*Retine vim . . . coges.* "Don't force me, for I shall lie if you use compulsion."

Birds warbled round me—and each trace  
Of inward sadness had its charm;  
Kilve, thought I, was a favoured place,  
And so is Liswyn farm.

My boy beside me tripped, so slim  
And graceful in his rustic dress!  
And, as we talked, I questioned him  
In very idleness.

"Now tell me, had you rather be,"  
I said, and took him by the arm,  
"On Kilve's smooth shore, by the green sea,  
Or here at Liswyn farm?"

In careless mood he looked at me,  
While still I held him by the arm,  
And said, "At Kilve I'd rather be  
Than here at Liswyn farm."

"Now, little Edward, say why so:  
My little Edward, tell me why."—  
"I cannot tell, I do not know."—  
"Why, this is strange," said I;

"For, here are woods, hills smooth and warm:  
There surely must some reason be  
Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm  
For Kilve by the green sea."

At this, my boy hung down his head,  
He blushed with shame, nor made reply;  
And three times to the child I said,  
" Why, Edward, tell me why? "

His head he raised—there was in sight,  
It caught his eye, he saw it plain—  
Upon the house-top, glittering bright,  
A broad and gilded vane.

Then did the boy his tongue unlock,  
And eased his mind with this reply:  
" At Kilve there was no weather-cock;  
And that's the reason why."

O dearest, dearest boy! my heart  
For better lore would seldom yearn,  
Could I but teach the hundredth part  
Of what from thee I learn.

(1798)

## TO H. C.

## SIX YEARS OLD

O THOU! whose fancies from afar are brought;  
Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,  
And fittest to unutterable thought  
The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol:

Thou faery voyager! that dost float  
In such clear water, that thy boat  
May rather seem  
To brood on air than on an earthly stream;  
Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,  
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery;  
O blessed vision! happy child!  
Thou art so exquisitely wild,  
I think of thee with many fears  
For what may be thy lot in future years.

I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,  
Lord of thy house and hospitality;  
And Grief, uneasy lover! never rest  
But when she sate within the touch of thee.  
O too industrious folly!  
O vain and causeless melancholy!  
Nature will either end thee quite;  
Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,  
Preserve for thee, by individual right,  
A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks.  
What hast thou to do with sorrow,  
Or the injuries of to-morrow?  
Thou art a dew-drop, which the morn brings forth,  
Ill fitted to sustain unkindly shocks,  
Or to be trailed along the soiling earth;  
A gem that glitters while it lives,  
And no forewarning gives;  
But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife  
Slips in a moment out of life.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHILD THREE  
YEARS OLD

LOVING she is, and tractable, though wild;  
And Innocence hath privilege in her  
To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes;  
And feats of cunning; and the pretty round  
Of trespasses, affected to provoke  
Mock-chastisement and partnership in play.  
And, as a faggot sparkles on the hearth,  
Not less if unattended and alone  
Than when both young and old sit gathered round  
And take delight in its activity;  
Even so this happy Creature of herself  
Is all-sufficient, solitude to her  
Is blithe society, who fills the air  
With gladness and involuntary songs.  
Light are her sallies as the tripping fawn's  
Forth-startled from the fern where she lay couched;  
Unthought-of, unexpected, as the stir  
Of the soft breeze ruffling the meadow-flowers,  
Or from before it chasing wantonly  
The many-coloured images imprest  
Upon the bosom of a placid lake.

(1811)

## THE SPARROW'S NEST

BEHOLD, within the leafy shade,  
Those bright blue eggs together laid!  
On me the chance-discovered sight

Gleamed like a vision of delight.  
 I started—seeming to espy  
 The home and sheltered bed,  
 The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by  
 My Father's house, in wet or dry  
 My sister Emmeline and I  
 Together visited.

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;  
 Dreading, tho' wishing, to be near it:  
 Such heart was in her, being then  
 A little Prattler among men.  
 The Blessing of my later years  
 Was with me when a boy:  
 She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;  
 And humble cares, and delicate fears;  
 A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;  
 And love, and thought, and joy.

(1801)

## TO A BUTTERFLY

## I

STAY near me—do not take thy flight!  
 A little longer stay in sight!  
 Much converse do I find in thee,  
 Historian of my infancy!  
 Float near me; do not yet depart!

Dead times revive in thee:  
Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art!  
A solemn image to my heart,  
My father's family!

Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,  
The time, when, in our childish plays,  
My sister Emmeline and I  
Together chased the butterfly!  
A very hunter did I rush  
Upon the prey:—with leaps and springs  
I followed on from brake to bush;  
But she, God love her, feared to brush  
The dust from off its wings.

## II

I've watched you now a full half-hour,  
Self-poised upon that yellow flower;  
And, little Butterfly! indeed  
I know not if you sleep or feed.  
How motionless!—not frozen seas  
More motionless! and then  
What joy awaits you, when the breeze  
Hath found you out among the trees,  
And calls you forth again!

This plot of orchard-ground is ours;  
My trees they are, my Sister's flowers;  
Here rest your wings when they are weary;  
Here lodge as in a sanctuary!

Come often to us, fear no wrong;  
 Sit near us on the bough!  
 We'll talk of sunshine and of song,  
 And summer days, when we were young:  
 Sweet childish days, that were as long  
 As twenty days are now.

(1802)

## “MY HEART LEAPS UP WHEN I BEHOLD”

My heart leaps up when I behold  
 A rainbow in the sky:  
 So was it when my life began;  
 So is it now I am a man;  
 So be it when I shall grow old,  
 Or let me die!  
 The Child is father of the Man;  
 And I could wish my days to be  
 Bound each to each by natural piety.

(1802)

## THE LESSER CELANDINE

THERE is a Flower, the lesser Celandine,  
 That shrinks, like many more, from cold and rain;  
 And, the first moment that the sun may shine,  
 Bright as the sun himself, 'tis out again!

When hailstones have been falling, swarm on swarm,  
 Or blasts the green field and the trees distrest,

Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm,  
In close self-shelter, like a Thing at rest.

But lately, one rough day, this Flower I passed  
And recognised it, though an altered form,  
Now standing forth an offering to the blast,  
And buffeted at will by rain and storm.

I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,  
" It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold:  
This neither is its courage nor its choice,  
But its necessity in being old.

" The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew;  
It cannot help itself in its decay;  
Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue."  
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was grey.

To be a Prodigal's Favourite—then, worse truth,  
A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!  
O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth  
Age might but take the things Youth needed not!

(1804)

### THE GREEN LINNET

BENEATH these fruit-tree boughs that shed  
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,  
With brightest sunshine round me spread  
Of spring's unclouded weather,

In this sequestered nook how sweet  
To sit upon my orchard-seat!  
And birds and flowers once more to greet,  
My last year's friends together.

One have I marked, the happiest guest  
In all this covert of the blest:  
Hail to Thee, far above the rest  
    In joy of voice and pinion!  
Thou, Linnet! in thy green array,  
Presiding Spirit here to-day,  
Dost lead the revels of the May;  
    And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,  
Make all one band of paramours,  
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,  
    Art sole in thy employment:  
A Life, a Presence like the Air,  
Scattering thy gladness without care,  
Too blest with any one to pair;  
    Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,  
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,  
Behold him perched in ecstasies,  
    Yet seeming still to hover;  
There! where the flutter of his wings  
Upon his back and body flings  
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,  
    That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,  
 A Brother of the dancing leaves;  
 Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves  
     Pours forth his song in gushes;  
 As if by that exulting strain  
 He mocked and treated with disdain  
 The voiceless Form he chose to feign,  
     While fluttering in the bushes.

(1803)

TO THE CUCKOO<sup>1</sup>

O BLITHE New-comer! I have heard,  
 I hear thee and rejoice.  
 O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,  
 Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass  
 Thy twofold shout I hear,  
 From hill to hill it seems to pass,  
 At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale,  
 Of sunshine and of flowers,  
 Thou bringest unto me a tale  
 Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!  
 Even yet thou art to me  
 No bird, but an invisible thing,  
 A voice, a mystery;

<sup>1</sup> Composed in the orchard, Town-end, Grasmere.

The same whom in my school-boy days  
I listened to; that Cry  
Which made me look a thousand ways  
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove  
Through woods and on the green;  
And thou wert still a hope, a love;  
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;  
Can lie upon the plain  
And listen, till I do beget  
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace  
Again appears to be  
An unsubstantial, faery place;  
That is fit home for Thee!

(1804)

#### "YES, IT WAS THE MOUNTAIN ECHO"

YES, it was the mountain Echo,  
Solitary, clear, profound,  
Answering to the shouting Cuckoo,  
Giving to her sound for sound!

Unsolicited reply  
To a babbling wanderer sent;  
Like her ordinary cry,  
Like—but oh, how different!

Hears not also mortal Life?  
Hear not we, unthinking Creatures!  
Slaves of folly, love, or strife—  
Voices of two different natures?

Have not *we* too?—yes, we have  
Answers, and we know not whence;  
Echoes from beyond the grave,  
Recognised intelligence!

Such rebounds our inward ear  
Catches sometimes from afar—  
Listen, ponder, hold them dear;  
For of God,—of God they are.

(1806)

"O NIGHTINGALE! THOU SURELY ART"

O NIGHTINGALE! thou surely art  
A creature of a "fiery heart":—  
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;  
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!  
Thou sing'st as if the God of wine  
Had helped thee to a Valentine;

A song in mockery and despite  
 Of shades, and dews, and silent night;  
 And steady bliss, and all the loves  
 Now sleeping in these peaceful groves.

I heard a Stock-dove sing or say  
 His homely tale, this very day;  
 His voice was buried among trees,  
 Yet to be come at by the breeze:  
 He did not cease; but cooed—and cooed;  
 And somewhat pensively he wooed;  
 He sang of love, with quiet blending,  
 Slow to begin, and never ending;  
 Of serious faith, and inward glee;  
 That was the song—the song for me!

(1807)

TO A SKYLARK<sup>1</sup>

ETHEREAL minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!  
 Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?  
 Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye  
 Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?  
 Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,  
 Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;  
 A privacy of glorious light is thine;

<sup>1</sup> Written at Rydal Mount.

Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood  
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;  
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;  
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

(1825)

YEW-TREES<sup>1</sup>

THERE is a Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale,  
Which to this day stands single, in the midst  
Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore;  
Not loth to furnish weapons for the bands  
Of Umfraville or Percy ere they marched  
To Scotland's heaths: or those that crossed the sea  
And drew their sounding bows at Azincour,  
Perhaps at earlier Crecy, or Poictiers.  
Of vast circumference and gloom profound  
This solitary Tree! a living thing  
Produced too slowly ever to decay;  
Of form and aspect too magnificent  
To be destroyed. But worthier still of note  
Are those fraternal Four of Borrowdale,  
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;  
Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth  
Of intertwined fibres serpentine  
Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved;  
Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks

<sup>1</sup> Written at Grasmere.

That threaten the profane;—a pillared shade,  
 Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,  
 By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged  
 Perennially—beneath whose sable roof  
 Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked  
 With unrejoicing berries—ghostly Shapes  
 May meet at noontide; Fear and trembling Hope,  
 Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton  
 And Time the Shadow;—there to celebrate  
 As in a natural temple scattered o'er  
 With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,  
 United worship; or in mute repose  
 To lie, and listen to the mountain flood  
 Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.

(1803)

TO A HIGHLAND GIRL<sup>1</sup>

AT INVERSNEYDE, UPON LOCH LOMOND

SWEET Highland Girl, a very shower  
 Of beauty is thy earthly dower!  
 Twice seven consenting years have shed  
 Their utmost bounty on thy head:  
 And these grey rocks; that household lawn;  
 Those trees, a veil just half withdrawn;  
 This fall of water that doth make

<sup>1</sup> This delightful creature and her demeanour are particularly described in my Sister's Journal.

A murmur near the silent lake;  
This little bay; a quiet road  
That holds in shelter thy Abode—  
In truth together do ye seem  
Like something fashioned in a dream;  
Such Forms as from their covert peep  
When earthly cares are laid asleep!  
But, O fair Creature! in the light  
Of common day, so heavenly bright,  
I bless Thee, Vision as thou art,  
I bless thee with a human heart;  
God shield thee to thy latest years!  
Thee, neither know I, nor thy peers;  
And yet my eyes are filled with tears.

With earnest feeling I shall pray  
For thee when I am far away:  
For never saw I mien, or face,  
In which more plainly I could trace  
Benignity and home-bred sense  
Ripening in perfect innocence.  
Here scattered, like a random seed,  
Remote from men, Thou dost not need  
The embarrassed look of shy distress,  
And maidenly shamefacedness:  
Thou wear'st upon thy forehead clear  
The freedom of a Mountaineer:  
A face with gladness overspread!  
Soft smiles, by human kindness bred!  
And seemliness complete, that sways  
Thy courtesies, about thee plays;

With no restraint, but such as springs  
From quick and eager visitings  
Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach  
Of thy few words of English speech:  
A bondage sweetly brooked, a strife  
That gives thy gestures grace and life!  
So have I, not unmoved in mind,  
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind—  
Thus beating up against the wind.

What hand but would a garland pull  
For thee who art so beautiful?  
O happy pleasure! here to dwell  
Beside thee in some heathy dell;  
Adopt your homely ways, and dress,  
A Shepherd, thou a Shepherdess!  
But I could frame a wish for thee  
More like a grave reality:  
Thou art to me but as a wave  
Of the wild sea; and I would have  
Some claim upon thee, if I could,  
Though but of common neighbourhood.  
What joy to hear thee, and to see!  
Thy elder Brother I would be,  
Thy Father—anything to thee!

Now thanks to Heaven! that of its grace  
Hath led me to this lonely place.  
Joy have I had; and going hence  
I bear away my recompence.  
In spots like these it is we prize  
Our Memory, feel that she hath eyes:

Then, why should I be loth to stir?  
I feel this place was made for her;  
To give new pleasure like the past,  
Continued long as life shall last.  
Nor am I loth, though pleased at heart,  
Sweet Highland Girl! from thee to part:  
For I, methinks, till I grow old,  
As fair before me shall behold,  
As I do now, the cabin small,  
The lake, the bay, the waterfall;  
And Thee, the Spirit of them all!

(1803)

## THE SOLITARY REAPER

BEHOLD her, single in the field,  
Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
Reaping and singing by herself;  
Stop here, or gently pass!  
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain;  
O listen! for the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian sands:

A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
 In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
 Breaking the silence of the seas  
 Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—  
 Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
 For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
 And battles long ago:  
 Or is it some more humble lay,  
 Familiar matter of to-day?  
 Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
 That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang  
 As if her song could have no ending;  
 I saw her singing at her work,  
 And o'er the sickle bending;—  
 I listened, motionless and still;  
 And, as I mounted up the hill  
 The music in my heart I bore,  
 Long after it was heard no more.

(1803)

#### “SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT”

SHE was a Phantom of delight  
 When first she gleamed upon my sight;  
 A lovely Apparition, sent  
 To be a moment's ornament;

Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;  
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;  
But all things else about her drawn  
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;  
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,  
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

I saw her upon nearer view,  
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!  
Her household motions light and free,  
And steps of virgin-liberty;  
A countenance in which did meet  
Sweet records, promises as sweet;  
A Creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food;  
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene  
The very pulse of the machine;  
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,  
A Traveller between life and death:  
The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;  
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort, and command;  
And yet a Spirit still, and bright  
With something of angelic light.

## “I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD”

I WANDERED lonely as a cloud  
 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
 When all at once I saw a crowd,  
 A host, of golden daffodils;  
 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
 And twinkle on the milky way,  
 They stretched in never-ending line  
 Along the margin of a bay:  
 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
 Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
 A poet could not but be gay,  
 In such a jocund company:  
 I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
 What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
 In vacant or in pensive mood,  
 They flash upon that inward eye  
 Which is the bliss of solitude;  
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
 And dances with the daffodils.

COMPOSED UPON AN EVENING OF EXTRA-  
ORDINARY SPLENDOUR AND BEAUTY

## I

HAD this effulgence disappeared  
With flying haste, I might have sent,  
Among the speechless clouds, a look  
Of blank astonishment;  
But 'tis endued with power to stay,  
And sanctify one closing day,  
That frail Mortality may see—  
What is?—ah no, but what *can* be!  
Time was when field and watery cove  
With modulated echoes rang,  
While choirs of fervent Angels sang  
Their vespers in the grove;  
Or, crowning, star-like, each some sovereign height,  
Warbled, for heaven above and earth below,  
Strains suitable to both.—Such holy rite,  
Methinks, if audibly repeated now  
From hill or valley, could not move  
Sublimer transport, purer love,  
Than doth this silent spectacle—the gleam—  
The shadow—and the peace supreme!

## II

No sound is uttered,—but a deep  
And solemn harmony pervades

The hollow vale from steep to steep,  
 And penetrates the glades.  
 Far-distant images draw nigh,  
 Called forth by wondrous potency  
 Of beamy radiance, that imbues,  
 Whate'er it strikes, with gem-like hues!  
 In vision exquisitely clear,  
 Herds range along the mountain side;  
 And glistening antlers are descried;  
 And gilded flocks appear.  
 Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve!  
 But long as god-like wish, or hope divine,  
 Informs my spirit, ne'er can I believe  
 That this magnificence is wholly thine!  
 —From worlds not quickened by the sun  
 A portion of the gift is won;  
 An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread  
 On ground which British shepherds tread!

## III

And, if there be whom broken ties  
 Afflict, or injuries assail,  
 Yon hazy ridges to their eyes  
 Present a glorious scale,  
 Climbing suffused with sunny air,  
 To stop—no record hath told where.  
 And tempting Fancy to ascend,  
 And with immortal Spirits blend!

—Wings at my shoulders seem to play;  
But, rooted here, I stand and gaze  
On those bright steps that heavenward raise  
Their practicable way.  
Come forth, ye drooping old men, look abroad,  
And see to what fair countries ye are bound!  
And if some traveller, weary of his road,  
Hath slept since noon-tide on the grassy ground,  
Ye Genii! to his covert speed;  
And wake him with such gentle heed  
As may attune his soul to meet the dower  
Bestowed on this transcendent hour!

## IV

Such hues from their celestial Urn  
Were wont to stream before mine eye,  
Where'er it wandered in the morn  
Of blissful infancy.  
This glimpse of glory, why renewed?  
Nay, rather speak with gratitude;  
For, if a vestige of those gleams  
Survived, 'twas only in my dreams.  
Dread Power! whom peace and calmness serve  
No less than Nature's threatening voice,  
If aught unworthy be my choice,  
From THEE if I would swerve;  
Oh, let thy grace remind me of the light  
Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;

Which, at this moment, on my waking sight  
Appears to shine, by miracle restored;  
My soul, though yet confined to earth,  
Rejoices in a second birth!

—'Tis past, the visionary splendour fades;  
And night approaches with her shades.

(1818)





## PART II

### LINES

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON  
REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR.

JULY 13, 1798

FIVE years have past; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view  
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts.  
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see  
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem

Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire  
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,

We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—  
In darkness and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—  
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!  
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again:  
While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when  
first

I came among these hills; when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led: more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
Abundant recompense. For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,

And what perceive; well pleased to recognise  
In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:  
For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,  
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart, and read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once,  
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;

And let the misty mountain-winds be free  
To blow against thee: and, in after years,  
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind  
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,  
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—  
If I should be where I no more can hear  
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these  
gleams  
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget  
That on the banks of this delightful stream  
We stood together; and that I, so long  
A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
Unwearied in that service: rather say  
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal  
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,  
That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

(1798)

## ELEGIAC STANZAS

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE, IN A  
STORM, PAINTED BY SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT

I WAS thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile!  
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee:  
I saw thee every day; and all the while  
Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air!  
So like, so very like, was day to day!  
Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there;  
It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm! it seemed no sleep;  
No mood, which season takes away, or brings:  
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep  
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

Ah! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,  
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,  
The light that never was, on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the Poet's dream;

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile,  
Amid a world how different from this!  
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;  
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house divine  
Of peaceful years; a chronicle of heaven;—  
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine  
The very sweetest had to thee been given.

A Picture had it been of lasting ease,  
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;  
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,  
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,  
Such Picture would I at that time have made:  
And seen the soul of truth in every part,  
A stedfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;  
I have submitted to a new control:  
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;  
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold  
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:  
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;  
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been  
the Friend,  
If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,  
This work of thine I blame not, but commend;  
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate Work!—yet wise and well,  
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;

That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,  
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,  
I love to see the look with which it braves,  
Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,  
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,  
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!  
Such happiness, wherever it be known,  
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,  
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!  
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—  
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

(1805)

## LINES

Composed at Grasmere, during a walk one Evening, after  
a stormy day, the Author having just read in a Newspaper  
that the dissolution of Mr. Fox was hourly expected.

LOUD is the Vale! the Voice is up  
With which she speaks when storms are gone,  
A mighty unison of streams!  
Of all her Voices, One!

Loud is the Vale;—this inland Depth  
In peace is roaring like the Sea;  
Yon star upon the mountain-top  
Is listening quietly.

Sad was I, even to pain dearest,  
 Importunate and heavy load!  
 The Comforter hath found me here,  
 Upon this lonely road,

And many thousands now are sad—  
 Wait the fulfilment of their fear;  
 For he must die who is their stay,  
 Their glory disappear.

A Power is passing from the earth  
 To breathless Nature's dark abyss;  
 But when the great and good depart  
 What is it more than this—

That Man, who is from God sent forth,  
 Doth yet again to God return?—  
 Such ebb and flow must ever be,  
 Then wherefore should we mourn?

(1806)

### STAR-GAZERS

WHAT crowd is this? what have we here! we must  
 not pass it by;  
 A Telescope upon its frame, and pointed to the sky:  
 Long is it as a barber's pole, or mast of little boat,  
 Some little pleasure-skiff, that doth on Thames's  
 waters float.

The Showman chooses well his place, 'tis Leicester's  
busy Square;  
And is as happy in his night, for the heavens are blue  
and fair;  
Calm, though impatient, is the crowd; each stands  
ready with the fee,  
And envies him that's looking;—what an insight  
must it be!

Yet, Showman, where can be the cause? Shall thy  
Implement have blame,  
A boaster, that when he is tried, fails, and is put to  
shame?  
Or is it good as others are, and be their eyes in fault?  
Their eyes, or minds? or, finally, is yon resplendent  
vault?

Is nothing of that radiant pomp so good as we have  
here?  
Or gives a thing but small delight that never can be  
dear?  
The silver moon with all her vales, and hills of  
mightiest fame,  
Doth she betray us when they're seen? or are they  
but a name?

Or is it rather that Conceit rapacious is and strong,  
And bounty never yields so much but it seems to do  
her wrong?

Or is it, that when human Souls a journey long have  
had

And are returned into themselves, they cannot but  
be sad?

Or must we be constrained to think that these  
Spectators rude,

Poor in estate, of manners base, men of the multitude,  
Have souls which never yet have risen, and therefore  
prostrate lie?

No, no, this cannot be;—men thirst for power and  
majesty!

Does, then, a deep and earnest thought the blissful  
mind employ

Of him who gazes, or has gazed? a grave and steady  
joy.

That doth reject all show of pride, admits no outward  
sign,

Because not of this noisy world, but silent and divine!

Whatever be the cause, 'tis sure that they who pry  
and pore

Seem to meet with little gain, seem less happy than  
before:

One after One they take their turn, nor have I one  
espied

That doth not slackly go away, as if dissatisfied.  
(1806)

## THE OLD CUMBERLAND BEGGAR

I SAW an aged Beggar in my walk;  
And he was seated, by the highway side,  
On a low structure of rude masonry  
Built at the foot of a huge hill, that they  
Who lead their horses down the steep rough road  
May thence remount at ease. The aged Man  
Had placed his staff across the broad smooth stone  
That overlays the pile; and, from a bag  
All white with flour, the dole of village dames,  
He drew his scraps and fragments, one by one;  
And scanned them with a fixed and serious look  
Of idle computation. In the sun,  
Upon the second step of that small pile,  
Surrounded by those wild unpeopled hills,  
He sat, and ate his food in solitude:  
And ever, scattered from his palsied hand,  
That, still attempting to prevent the waste,  
Was baffled still, the crumbs in little showers  
Fell on the ground; and the small mountain birds,  
Not venturing yet to peck their destined meal,  
Approached within the length of half his staff.

Him from my childhood have I known; and then  
He was so old, he seems not older now;  
He travels on, a solitary Man,  
So helpless in appearance, that for him  
The sauntering Horseman throws not with a slack  
And careless hand his alms upon the ground,

But stops,—that he may safely lodge the coin  
Within the old Man's hat; nor quits him so,  
But still, when he has given his horse the rein,  
Watches the aged Beggar with a look  
Sidelong, and half-reverted. She who tends  
The toll-gate, when in summer at her door  
She turns her wheel, if on the road she sees  
The aged beggar coming, quits her work,  
And lifts the latch for him that he may pass.  
The post-boy, when his rattling wheels o'ertake  
The aged Beggar in the woody lane,  
Shouts to him from behind; and if, thus warned,  
The old man does not change his course, the boy  
Turns with less noisy wheels to the roadside,  
And passes gently by, without a curse  
Upon his lips, or anger at his heart.

He travels on, a solitary Man;  
His age has no companion. On the ground  
His eyes are turned, and, as he moves along  
*They move along the ground;* and, evermore,  
Instead of common and habitual sight  
Of fields with rural works, of hill and dale,  
And the blue sky, one little span of earth  
Is all his prospect. Thus, from day to day,  
Bow-bent, his eyes for ever on the ground,  
He plies his weary journey; seeing still,  
And seldom knowing that he sees, some straw,  
Some scattered leaf, or marks which, in one track,  
The nails of cart or chariot-wheel have left  
Impressed on the white road,—in the same line,

At distance still the same. Poor Traveller!  
His staff trails with him; scarcely do his feet  
Disturb the summer dust; he is so still  
In look and motion, that the cottage curs,  
Ere he has passed the door, will turn away,  
Weary of barking at him. Boys and girls,  
The vacant and the busy, maids and youths,  
And urchins newly breeched—all pass him by:  
Him even the slow-paced waggon leaves behind.

But deem not this Man useless.—Statesmen! ye  
Who are so restless in your wisdom, ye  
Who have a broom still ready in your hands  
To rid the world of nuisances; ye proud,  
Heart-swoln, while in your pride ye contemplate  
Your talents, power, or wisdom, deem him not  
A burthen of the earth! 'Tis Nature's law  
That none, the meanest of created things,  
Or forms created the most vile and brute,  
The dullest or most noxious, should exist  
Divorced from good—a spirit and pulse of good,  
A life and soul, to every mode of being  
Inseparably linked. Then be assured  
That least of all can aught—that ever owned  
The heaven-regarding eye and front sublime  
Which man is born to—sink, howe'er depressed,  
So low as to be scorned without a sin;  
Without offence to God cast out of view;  
Like the dry remnant of a garden-flower  
Whose seeds are shed, or as an implement  
Worn out and worthless. While from door to door,

This old Man creeps, the villagers in him  
Behold a record which together binds  
Past deeds and offices of charity,  
Else unremembered, and so keeps alive  
The kindly mood in hearts which lapse of years,  
And that half-wisdom half-experience gives,  
Make slow to feel, and by sure steps resign  
To selfishness and cold oblivious cares.  
Among the farms and solitary huts,  
Hamlets and thinly-scattered villages,  
Where'er the aged Beggar takes his rounds,  
The mild necessity of use compels  
To acts of love; and habit does the work  
Of reason; yet prepares that after-joy  
Which reason cherishes. And thus the soul,  
By that sweet taste of pleasure unpursued,  
Doth find herself insensibly disposed  
To virtue and true goodness.

Some there are,  
By their good works exalted, lofty minds  
And meditative, authors of delight  
And happiness, which to the end of time  
Will live, and spread, and kindle: even such minds  
In childhood, from this solitary Being,  
Or from like wanderer, haply have received  
(A thing more precious far than all the books  
Or the solicitudes of love can do!)  
That first mild touch of sympathy and thought,  
In which they found their kindred with a world  
Where want and sorrow were. The easy man

Who sits at his own door,—and, like the pear  
That overhangs his head from the green wall,  
Feeds in the sunshine; the robust and young,  
The prosperous and unthinking, they who live  
Sheltered, and flourish in a little grove  
Of their own kindred;—all behold in him  
A silent monitor, which on their minds  
Must needs impress a transitory thought  
Of self-congratulation, to the heart  
Of each recalling his peculiar boons,  
His charters and exemptions; and, perchance,  
Though he to no one give the fortitude  
And circumspection needful to preserve  
His present blessings, and to husband up  
The respite of the season, he, at least,  
And 'tis no vulgar service, makes them felt.

Yet further.—Many, I believe, there are  
Who live a life of virtuous decency,  
Men who can hear the Decalogue and feel  
No self-reproach; who of the moral law  
Established in the land where they abide  
Are strict observers; and not negligent  
In acts of love to those with whom they dwell,  
Their kindred, and the children of their blood.  
Praise be to such, and to their slumbers peace!  
—But of the poor man ask, the abject poor;  
Go, and demand of him, if there be here  
In this cold abstinence from evil deeds,  
And these inevitable charities,  
Wherewith to satisfy the human soul?

No—man is dear to man; the poorest poor  
Long for some moments in a weary life  
When they can know and feel that they have been,  
Themselves, the fathers and the dealers-out  
Of some small blessings; have been kind to such  
As needed kindness, for this single cause,  
That we have all of us one human heart.

—Such pleasure is to one kind Being known,  
My neighbour, when with punctual care, each week  
Duly as Friday comes, though pressed herself  
By her own wants, she from her store of meal  
Takes one unsparing handful for the scrip  
Of this old Mendicant, and, from her door  
Returning with exhilarated heart,  
Sits by her fire, and builds her hope in heaven.

Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!  
And while in that vast solitude to which  
The tide of things has borne him, he appears  
To breathe and live but for himself alone,  
Unblamed, uninjured, let him bear about  
The good which the benignant law of Heaven  
Has hung around him: and, while life is his,  
Still let him prompt the unlettered villagers  
To tender offices and pensive thoughts.

—Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!  
And, long as he can wander, let him breathe  
The freshness of the valleys; let his blood  
Struggle with frosty air and winter snows;  
And let the chartered wind that sweeps the heath  
Beat his grey locks against his withered face.

Reverence the hope whose vital anxiousness  
 Gives the last human interest to his heart.  
 May never HOUSE, misnamed of INDUSTRY,  
 Make him a captive—for that pent-up din,  
 Those life-consuming sounds that clog the air,  
 Be his the natural silence of old age!  
 Let him be free of mountain solitudes;  
 And have around him, whether heard or not,  
 The pleasant melody of woodland birds.  
 Few are his pleasures: if his eyes have now  
 Been doomed so long to settle upon earth  
 That not without some effort they behold  
 The countenance of the horizontal sun,  
 Rising or setting, let the light at least  
 Find a free entrance to their languid orbs.  
 And let him, *where* and *when* he will, sit down  
 Beneath the trees, or on a grassy bank  
 Of highway side, and with the little birds  
 Share his chance-gathered meal; and, finally,  
 As in the eye of Nature he has lived,  
 So in the eye of Nature let him die!

(1798)

## ANIMAL TRANQUILLITY AND DECAY

THE little hedgerow birds,

That peck along the roads, regard him not.  
 He travels on, and in his face, his step,  
 His gait, is one expression: every limb,  
 His look and bending figure, all bespeak

A man who does not move with pain, but moves  
 With thought—He is insensibly subdued  
 To settled quiet: he is one by whom  
 All effort seems forgotten; one to whom  
 Long patience hath such mild composure given,  
 That patience now doth seem a thing of which  
 He hath no need. He is by nature led  
 To peace so perfect that the young behold  
 With envy, what the Old Man hardly feels.

(1798)

## HART-LEAP WELL

THE Knight had ridden down from Wensley Moor  
 With the slow motion of a summer's cloud,  
 And now, as he approached a vassal's door,  
 " Bring forth another horse! " he cried aloud.

" Another horse! "—That shout the vassal heard  
 And saddled his best Steed, a comely grey;  
 Sir Walter mounted him; he was the third  
 Which he had mounted on that glorious day.

Joy sparkled in the prancing courser's eyes;  
 The horse and horseman are a happy pair;  
 But, though Sir Walter like a falcon flies,  
 There is a doleful silence in the air.

A rout this morning left Sir Walter's Hall,  
That as they galloped made the echoes roar;  
But horse and man are vanished, one and all;  
Such race, I think, was never seen before.

Sir Walter, restless as a veering wind,  
Calls to the few tired dogs that yet remain:  
Blanch, Swift, and Music, noblest of their kind,  
Follow, and up the weary mountain strain.

The Knight hallooed, he cheered and chid them on  
With suppliant gestures and upbraiding stern;  
But breath and eyesight fail; and, one by one,  
The dogs are stretched among the mountain fern.

Where is the throng, the tumult of the race?  
The bugles that so joyfully were blown?  
—This chase it looks not like an earthly chase;  
Sir Walter and the Hart are left alone.

The poor Hart toils along the mountain-side;  
I will not stop to tell how far he fled,  
Nor will I mention by what death he died;  
But now the Knight beholds him lying dead.

Dismounting, then, he leaned against a thorn;  
He had no follower, dog, nor man, nor boy:  
He neither cracked his whip, nor blew his horn,  
But gazed upon the spoil with silent joy.

Close to the thorn on which Sir Walter leaned,  
Stood his dumb partner in this glorious feat;  
Weak as a lamb the hour that it is weaned;  
And white with foam as if with cleaving sleet.

Upon his side the Hart was lying stretched:  
His nostril touched a spring beneath a hill,  
And with the last deep groan his breath had fetched  
The waters of the spring were trembling still.

And now, too happy for repose or rest,  
(Never had living man such joyful lot!)  
Sir Walter walked all round, north, south, and west,  
And gazed and gazed upon that darling spot.

And climbing up the hill—(it was at least  
Four rods of sheer ascent) Sir Walter found  
Three several hoof-marks which the hunted Beast  
Had left imprinted on the grassy ground.

Sir Walter wiped his face, and cried, "Till now  
Such sight was never seen by human eyes:  
Three leaps have borne him from this lofty brow,  
Down to the very fountain where he lies.

"I'll build a pleasure-house upon this spot,  
And a small arbour, made for rural joy;  
'Twill be the traveller's shed, the pilgrim's cot,  
A place of love for damsels that are coy.

"A cunning artist will I have to frame  
A basin for that fountain in the dell!  
And they who do make mention of the same,  
From this day forth, shall call it HART-LEAP WELL.

"And, gallant Stag! to make thy praises known,  
Another monument shall here be raised;  
Three several pillars, each a rough-hewn stone,  
And planted where thy hoofs the turf have grazed.

"And, in the summer-time when days are long,  
I will come hither with my Paramour;  
And with the dancers and the minstrel's song  
We will make merry in that pleasant bower.

"Till the foundations of the mountains fail  
My mansion with its arbour shall endure;—  
The joy of them who till the fields of Swale,  
And them who dwell among the woods of Ure!"

Then home he went, and left the Hart, stone-dead,  
With breathless nostrils stretched above the spring.  
—Soon did the Knight perform what he had said;  
And far and wide the fame thereof did ring.

Ere thrice the Moon into her port had steered,  
A cup of stone received the living well;  
Three pillars of rude stone Sir Walter reared,  
And built a house of pleasure in the dell.

And near the fountain, flowers of stature tall  
With trailing plants and trees were intertwined,—  
Which soon composed a little sylvan hall,  
A leafy shelter from the sun and wind.

And thither, when the summer days were long,  
Sir Walter led his wondering Paramour;  
And with the dancers and the minstrel's song  
Made merriment within that pleasant bower.

The Knight, Sir Walter, died in course of time,  
And his bones lie in his paternal vale.—  
But there is matter for a second rhyme,  
And I to this would add another tale.

#### PART SECOND

THE moving accident is not my trade;  
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts:  
'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,  
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

As I from Hawes to Richmond did repair,  
It chanced that I saw standing in a dell  
Three aspens at three corners of a square;  
And one, not four yards distant, near a well.

What this imported I could ill divine:  
And, pulling now the rein my horse to stop,

I saw three pillars standing in a line,—  
The last stone-pillar on a dark hill-top.

The trees were grey, with neither arms nor head;  
Half wasted the square mound of tawny green;  
So that you just might say, as then I said,  
"Here in old time the hand of man hath been."

I looked upon the hill both far and near,  
More doleful place did never eye survey;  
It seemed as if the spring-time came not here,  
And Nature here were willing to decay.

I stood in various thoughts and fancies lost,  
When one, who was in shepherd's garb attired,  
Came up the hollow:—him did I accost,  
And what this place might be I then inquired.

The Shepherd stopped, and that same story told  
Which in my former rhyme I have rehearsed.  
"A jolly place," said he, "in times of old!  
But something ails it now; the spot is curst.

" You see these lifeless stumps of aspen wood—  
Some say that they are beeches, others elms—  
These were the bower; and here a mansion stood,  
The finest palace of a hundred realms!

" The arbour does its own condition tell;  
You see the stones, the fountain, and the stream;  
But as to the great Lodge! you might as well  
Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream.

" There's neither dog nor heifer, horse nor sheep,  
Will wet his lips within that cup of stone;  
And oftentimes, when all are fast asleep,  
This water doth send forth a dolorous groan.

" Some say that here a murder has been done,  
And blood cries out for blood: but, for my part,  
I've guessed, when I've been sitting in the sun,  
That it was all for that unhappy Hart.

" What thoughts must through the creature's brain  
have past!  
Even from the topmost stone, upon the steep,  
Are but three bounds—and look, Sir, at this last—  
O Master! it has been a cruel leap.

" For thirteen hours he ran a desperate race;  
And in my simple mind we cannot tell  
What cause the Hart might have to love this place,  
And come and make his deathbed near the well.

" Here on the grass perhaps asleep he sank,  
Lulled by the fountain in the summer-tide;  
This water was perhaps the first he drank  
When he had wandered from his mother's side.

" In April here beneath the flowering thorn  
He heard the birds their morning carols sing;  
And he, perhaps, for aught we know, was born  
Not half a furlong from that self-same spring.

"Now, here is neither grass nor pleasant shade;  
The sun on drearier hollow never shone;  
So will it be, as I have often said,  
Till trees, and stones, and fountain, all are gone."

"Grey-headed Shepherd, thou hast spoken well;  
Small difference lies between thy creed and mine:  
This Beast not unobserved by Nature fell;  
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

"The Being, that is in the clouds and air,  
That is in the green leaves among the groves,  
Maintains a deep and reverential care  
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.

"The pleasure-house is dust:—behind, before,  
This is no common waste, no common gloom;  
But Nature, in due course of time, once more  
Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.

"She leaves these objects to a slow decay,  
That what we are, and have been, may be known;  
But at the coming of the milder day,  
These monuments shall all be overgrown.

"One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,  
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals;  
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

## RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

## I

THERE was a roaring in the wind all night;  
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;  
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;  
The birds are singing in the distant woods;  
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;  
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;  
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

## II

All things that love the sun are out of doors;  
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;  
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors  
The hare is running races in her mirth;  
And with her feet she from the plashy earth  
Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,  
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

## III

I was a Traveller then upon the moor,  
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;  
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;  
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:  
The pleasant season did my heart employ:  
My old remembrances went from me wholly;  
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

## IV

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might  
Of joy in minds that can no further go,  
As high as we have mounted in delight  
In our dejection do we sink as low;  
To me that morning did it happen so;  
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;  
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor  
could name

## V

I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky;  
And I bethought me of the playful hare:  
Even such a happy Child of earth am I;  
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;  
Far from the world I walk, and from all care;  
But there may come another day to me—  
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

## VI



My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,  
As if life's business were a summer mood;  
As if all needful things would come unsought  
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;  
But how can He expect that others should  
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call  
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

## VII

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,  
 The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;  
 Of Him who walked in glory and in joy  
 Following his plough, along the mountain-side:  
 By our own spirits are we deified:  
 We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;  
 But thereof come in the end despondency and  
 madness.

## VIII

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,  
 A leading from above, a something given,  
 Yet it befell, that, in this lonely place,  
 When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,  
 Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven  
 I saw a Man before me unawares:  
 The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey  
 hairs.

## IX

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie  
 Couched on the bald top of an eminence;  
 Wonder to all who do the same espy,  
 By what means it could thither come, and whence:  
 So that it seems a thing endued with sense:  
 Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf  
 Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself;

*Him.* Robert Burns (1759-96).

## X

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,  
Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age:  
His body was bent double, feet and head  
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;  
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage  
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,  
A more than human weight upon his frame had  
cast.

## XI

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,  
Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood:  
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,  
Upon the margin of that moorish flood  
Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,  
That heareth not the loud winds when they call  
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

## XII

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond  
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look  
Upon the muddy water, which he conned,  
As if he had been reading in a book:  
And now a stranger's privilege I took;  
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,  
“ This morning gives us promise of a glorious day.”

## XIII

A gentle answer did the old Man make,  
 In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew:  
 And him with further words I thus bespake,  
 "What occupation do you there pursue?  
 This is a lonesome place for one like you."  
 Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise  
 Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes.

## XIV

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,  
 But each in solemn order followed each,  
 With something of a lofty utterance drest—  
 Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach  
 Of ordinary men; a stately speech;  
 Such as grave Livers do in Scotland use,  
 Religious men, who give to God and man their dues

## XV

He told, that to these waters he had come  
 To gather leeches, being old and poor:  
 Employment hazardous and wearisome!  
 And he had many hardships to endure:  
 From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to  
     moor;  
 Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance,  
 And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

## XVI

The old Man still stood talking by my side;  
But now his voice to me was like a stream  
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;  
And the whole body of the Man did seem  
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;  
Or like a man from some far region sent,  
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

## XVII

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills;  
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;  
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;  
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.  
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,  
My question eagerly did I renew,  
“ How is it that you live, and what is it you do? ”

## XVIII

He with a smile did then his words repeat;  
And said, that, gathering leeches, far and wide  
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet  
The waters of the pools where they abide.  
“ Once I could meet with them on every side;  
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;  
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.”

## XIX

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,  
 The old Man's shape, and speech—all troubled me:  
 In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace  
 About the weary moors continually,  
 Wandering about alone and silently.  
 While I these thoughts within myself pursued,  
 He, having made a pause, the same discourse  
 renewed.

## XX

And soon with this he other matter blended,  
 Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,  
 But stately in the main; and when he ended,  
 I could have laughed myself to scorn to find  
 In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.  
 "God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;  
 I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely  
 moor!"

(1802)

## ✓ ODE TO DUTY

STERN Daughter of the Voice of God!  
 O Duty! if that name thou love  
 Who art a light to guide, a rod  
 To check the erring, and reprove;  
 Thou, who art victory and law  
 When empty terrors overawe;

From vain temptations dost set free;  
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

There are who ask not if thine eye  
Be on them; who, in love and truth,  
Where no misgiving is, rely  
Upon the genial sense of youth:  
Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot  
Who do thy work, and know it not:  
Oh! if through confidence misplaced  
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power! around  
them cast.

Serene will be our days and bright,  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security.  
And they a blissful course may hold  
Even now, who, not unwisely bold,  
Live in the spirit of this creed;  
Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom, and untried;  
No sport of every random gust,  
Yet being to myself a guide,  
Too blindly have reposed my trust:  
And oft, when in my heart was heard  
Thy timely mandate, I deferred  
The task, in smoother walks to stray;  
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul,  
Or strong compunction in me wrought,  
I supplicate for thy control;  
But in the quietness of thought:  
Me this unchartered freedom tires;  
I feel the weight of chance-desires:  
My hopes no more must change their name,  
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear  
The Godhead's most benignant grace;  
Nor know we anything so fair  
As is the smile upon thy face:  
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds  
And fragrance in thy footing treads;  
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;  
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are  
fresh and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power!  
I call thee: I myself commend  
Unto thy guidance from this hour;  
Oh, let my weakness have an end!  
Give unto me, made lowly wise,  
The spirit of self-sacrifice;  
The confidence of reason give;  
And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live!

## MICHAEL:

## A PASTORAL POEM

IF from the public way you turn your steps  
Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,  
You will suppose that with an upright path  
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent  
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.  
But, courage! for around that boisterous brook  
The mountains have all *opened out* themselves,  
And made a hidden valley of their own.  
No habitation can be seen; but they  
Who journey thither find themselves alone  
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites  
That overhead are sailing in the sky.  
It is in truth an utter solitude;  
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell  
But for one object which you might pass by,  
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook  
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!  
And to that simple object appertains  
A story—unenriched with strange events,  
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,  
Or for the summer shade. It was the first  
Of those domestic tales that spake to me  
Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men  
Whom I already loved; not verily  
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills  
Where was their occupation and abode.'

And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy  
Careless of books, yet having felt the power  
Of Nature, by the gentle agency  
Of natural objects, led me on to feel  
For passions that were not my own, and think  
(At random and imperfectly indeed)  
On man, the heart of man, and human life.  
Therefore, although it be a history  
Homely and rude, I will relate the same  
For the delight of a few natural hearts;  
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake  
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills  
Will be my second self when I am gone.

UPON the forest-side in Grasmere Vale  
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;  
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.  
His bodily frame had been from youth to age  
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,  
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,  
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt  
And watchful more than ordinary men.  
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,  
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,  
When others heeded not, He heard the South  
Make subterraneous music, like the noise  
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.  
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock  
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,  
" The winds are now devising work for me! "  
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives

The traveller to a shelter, summoned him  
Up to the mountains: he had been alone  
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,  
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.  
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.  
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose  
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,  
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.  
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed  
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step  
He had so often climbed; which had impressed  
So many incidents upon his mind  
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;  
Which, like a book, preserved the memory  
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,  
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts  
The certainty of honourable gain;  
Those fields, those hills—what could they less?  
had laid

Strong hold on his affections, were to him  
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,  
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.  
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—  
Though younger than himself full twenty years.  
She was a woman of a stirring life,  
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had  
Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;  
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest  
It was because the other was at work.

The Pair had but one inmate in their house,  
An only Child, who had been born to them  
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began  
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,  
With one foot in the grave. This only Son,  
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,  
The one of an inestimable worth,  
Made all their household. I may truly say,  
That they were as a proverb in the vale  
For endless industry. When day was gone,  
And from their occupations out of doors  
The Son and Father were come home, even then,  
Their labour did not cease; unless when all  
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,  
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,  
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,  
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the  
meal

Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)  
And his old Father both betook themselves  
To such convenient work as might employ  
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card  
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair  
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,  
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,  
That in our ancient uncouth country style  
With huge and black projection overbrowed  
Large space beneath, as duly as the light  
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp;

An aged utensil, which had performed  
Service beyond all others of its kind.  
Early at evening did it burn—and late,  
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,  
Which, going by from year to year, had found,  
And left, the couple neither gay perhaps  
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,  
Living a life of eager industry.  
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth  
year,

There by the light of this old lamp they sate,  
Father and Son, while far into the night  
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,  
Making the cottage through the silent hours  
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.  
This light was famous in its neighbourhood,  
And was a public symbol of the life  
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,  
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground  
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,  
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,  
And westward to the village near the lake;  
And from this constant light, so regular  
And so far seen, the House itself, by all  
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,  
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING  
STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,  
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs  
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart

This son of his old age was yet more dear—  
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same  
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—  
Than that a child, more than all other gifts  
That earth can offer to declining man,  
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,  
And stirrings of inquietude, when they  
By tendency of nature needs must fail.  
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,  
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes  
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,  
Had done him female service, not alone  
For pastime and delight, as is the use  
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced  
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked  
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy  
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,  
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,  
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he  
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool  
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched  
Under the large old oak, that near his door  
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,  
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,  
Thence in our rustic dialect was called  
The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears.  
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,  
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,  
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks

Of fond correction and reproof bestowed  
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep  
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts  
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew  
up

A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek  
Two steady roses that were five years old;  
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut  
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped  
With iron, making it throughout in all  
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,  
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt  
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed  
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;  
And, to his office prematurely called,  
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,  
Something between a hindrance and a help;  
And for this cause not always, I believe,  
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;  
Though nought was left undone which staff, or  
voice,  
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand  
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,  
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,  
He with his Father daily went, and they  
Were as companions, why should I relate  
That objects which the Shepherd loved before  
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came

Feelings and emanations—things which were  
Light to the sun and music to the wind;  
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up:  
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,  
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived  
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came  
Distressful tidings. Long before the time  
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound  
In surety for his brother's son, a man  
Of an industrious life, and ample means;  
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly  
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now  
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,  
A grievous penalty, but little less  
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,  
At the first hearing, for a moment took  
More hope out of his life than he supposed  
That any old man ever could have lost.  
As soon as he had armed himself with strength  
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed  
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once  
A portion of his patrimonial fields.  
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,  
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,  
Two evenings after he had heard the news,  
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,  
And in the open sunshine of God's love  
Have we all lived: yet if these fields of ours

Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think  
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.  
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself  
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;  
And I have lived to be a fool at last  
To my own family. An evil man  
That was, and made an evil choice, if he  
Were false to us; and if he were not false,  
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this  
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but  
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus

When I began, my purpose was to speak  
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.  
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land  
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;  
He shall possess it, free as is the wind  
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,  
Another kinsman—he will be our friend  
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,  
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,  
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift  
He quickly will repair this loss, and then  
He may return to us. If here he stay,  
What can be done? Where every one is poor,  
What can be gained?"

At this the old Man paused,  
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind  
Was busy, looking back into past times.  
There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,  
He was a parish-boy—at the church-door

They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence  
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought  
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;  
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad  
Went up to London, found a master there,  
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy  
To go and overlook his merchandise  
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,  
And left estates and monies to the poor.  
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel, floored  
With marble which he sent from foreign lands.  
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,  
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,  
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,  
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme  
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.  
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.  
—We have enough—I wish indeed that I  
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.  
—Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best  
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth  
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:  
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth  
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days  
Was restless morn and night, and all day long  
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare  
Things needful for the journey of her son.  
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came  
To stop her in her work: for, when she lay

By Michael's side, she through the last two nights  
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:  
And when they rose at morning she could see  
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon  
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves  
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:  
We have no other Child but thee to lose,  
None to remember—do not go away,  
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."  
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;  
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,  
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare  
Did she bring forth, and all together sat  
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;  
And all the ensuing week the house appeared  
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length  
The expected letter from their kinsman came,  
With kind assurances that he would do  
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;  
To which, requests were added, that forthwith  
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more  
The letter was read over; Isabel  
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round;  
Nor was there at that time on English land  
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel  
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,  
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word  
The Housewife answered, talking much of things  
Which, if at such short notice he should go,

Would surely be forgotten. But at length  
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,  
In that deep valley, Michael had designed  
To build a Sheepfold; and, before he heard  
The tidings of his melancholy loss,  
For this same purpose he had gathered up  
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge  
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.  
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:  
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,  
And thus the old Man spake to him:—" My Son,  
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart  
I look upon thee, for thou art the same  
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,  
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.  
I will relate to thee some little part  
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good  
When thou art from me, even if I should touch  
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou  
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls  
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away  
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue  
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,  
And still I loved thee with increasing love.  
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds  
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside  
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;  
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy  
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,

And in the open fields my life was passed  
And on the mountains; else I think that thou  
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.  
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,  
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young  
Have played together, nor with me didst thou  
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."

Luke had a manly heart; but at these words  
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,  
And said, " Nay, do not take it so—I see  
That these are things of which I need not speak.  
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee  
A kind and a good Father: and herein  
I but repay a gift which I myself  
Received at others' hands; for, though now old  
Beyond the common life of man, I still  
Remember them who loved me in my youth.  
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,  
As all their Forefathers had done; and when  
At length their time was come, they were not loth  
To give their bodies to the family mould.  
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived:  
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,  
And see so little gain from threescore years.  
These fields were burthened when they came to me;  
Till I was forty years of age, not more  
Than half of my inheritance was mine.  
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,  
And till these three weeks past the land was free.  
—It looks as if it never could endure

Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,  
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good  
That thou should'st go."

At this the old Man paused;  
Then, pointing to the stones near which they  
stood,

Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:  
" This was a work for us; and now, my Son,  
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—  
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.  
Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live  
To see a better day. At eighty-four  
I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;  
I will do mine—I will begin again  
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:  
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,  
Will I without thee go again, and do  
All works which I was wont to do alone,  
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!  
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast  
With many hopes; it should be so—yes—yes—  
I knew that thou could'st never have a wish  
To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me  
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,  
What will be left to us!—But, I forget  
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,  
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,  
When thou art gone away, should evil men  
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,  
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,

And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear  
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou  
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,  
Who, being innocent, did for that cause  
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—  
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see  
A work which is not here: a covenant  
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate  
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,  
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped  
down,

And, as his Father had requested, laid  
The first stone of the Sheepfold. At the sight  
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart  
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;  
And to the house together they returned.

—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming  
peace,

Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy  
Began his journey, and when he had reached  
The public way, he put on a bold face;  
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,  
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,  
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,  
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy  
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,  
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were through-  
out

"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."  
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.  
So, many months passed on: and once again  
The Shepherd went about his daily work  
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now  
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour  
He to that valley took his way, and there  
Wrought at the Sheepfold. Meantime Luke  
began  
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,  
He in the dissolute city gave himself  
To evil courses: ignominy and shame  
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last  
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;  
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else  
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:  
I have conversed with more than one who well  
Remember the old Man, and what he was  
Years after he had heard this heavy news.  
His bodily frame had been from youth to age  
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks  
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,  
And listened to the wind; and, as before,  
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,  
And for the land, his small inheritance.  
And to that hollow dell from time to time  
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which  
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet  
The pity which was then in every heart

For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all  
 That many and many a day he thither went,  
 And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheepfold, sometimes was he seen  
 Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,  
 Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.

The length of full seven years, from time to time,  
 He at the building of this Sheepfold wrought,  
 And left the work unfinished when he died.

Three years, or little more, did Isabel  
 Survive her Husband: at her death the estate  
 Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.

The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR  
 Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the  
 ground

On which it stood; great changes have been  
 wrought

In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left  
 That grew beside their door; and the remains  
 Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen  
 Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.

(1800)

### “ACTION IS TRANSITORY”

ACTION is transitory—a step, a blow,  
 The motion of a muscle—this way or that—  
 'Tis done; and in the after-vacancy  
 We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:

Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,  
 And has the nature of infinity.  
 Yet through that darkness (infinite though it seem  
 And irremoveable) gracious openings lie,  
 By which the soul—with patient steps of thought  
 Now toiling, wafted now on wings of prayer—  
 May pass in hope, and, though from mortal bonds  
 Yet undelivered, rise with sure ascent  
 Even to the fountain-head of peace divine.

(1795)

“ NUNS FRET NOT AT THEIR CONVENT'S  
 NARROW ROOM ”

NUNS fret not at their convent's narrow room;  
 And hermits are contented with their cells;  
 And students with their pensive citadels;  
 Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,  
 Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,  
 High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,  
 Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:  
 In truth the prison, unto which we doom  
 Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,  
 In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound  
 Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground;  
 Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)  
 Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,  
 Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

(1807)

" CALM IS ALL NATURE AS A  
RESTING WHEEL "

CALM is all nature as a resting wheel.  
The kine are couched upon the dewy grass;  
The horse alone, seen dimly as I pass,  
Is cropping audibly his later meal:  
Dark is the ground; a slumber seems to steal  
O'er vale, and mountain, and the starless sky.  
Now, in this blank of things, a harmony,  
Home-felt, and home-created, comes to heal  
That grief for which the senses will supply  
Fresh food; for only then, when memory  
Is hushed, am I at rest. My Friends! restrain  
Those busy cares that would allay my pain;  
Oh! leave me to myself, nor let me feel  
The officious touch that makes me droop again.

(Before 1790)

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE,

SEPT. 3, 1802<sup>1</sup>

EARTH has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear

<sup>1</sup> Written on the roof of a coach, on my way to France.

The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
 Never did sun more beautifully steep  
 In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
 The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
 Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
 And all that mighty heart is lying still!

## CALAIS SANDS

IT is a beauteous evening, calm and free,  
 The holy time is quiet as a Nun  
 Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
 Is sinking down in its tranquillity;  
 The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea:  
 Listen! the mighty Being is awake,  
 And doth with his eternal motion make  
 A sound like thunder—everlastingly.  
 Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,  
 If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,  
 Thy nature is not therefore less divine:  
 Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;  
 And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,  
 God being with thee when we know it not.

" THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US;  
LATE AND SOON "

THE world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

(1806)

" THOSE WORDS WERE UTTERED AS IN  
PENSIVE MOOD "

— they are of the sky,  
And from our earthly memory fade away.

THOSE words were uttered as in pensive mood  
We turned, departing from that solemn sight:  
A contrast and reproach to gross delight,  
And life's unspiritual pleasures daily wooed!  
But now upon this thought I cannot brood;

It is unstable as a dream of night;  
 Nor will I praise a cloud, however bright,  
 Disparaging Man's gifts, and proper food.  
 Grove, isle, with every shape of sky-built dome  
 Though clad in colours beautiful and pure,  
 Find in the heart of man no natural home:  
 The immortal Mind craves objects that endure:  
 These cleave to it; from these it cannot roam,  
 Nor they from it: their friendship is secure.

(1806)

## PERSONAL TALK

I AM not One who much or oft delight  
 To season my fireside with personal talk.—  
 Of friends, who live within an easy walk,  
 Or neighbours, daily, weekly, in my sight:  
 And, for my chance-acquaintance, ladies bright,  
 Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the stalk,  
 These all wear out of me, like Forms, with chalk  
 Painted on rich men's floors, for one feast-night.  
 Better than such discourse doth silence long,  
 Long, barren silence, square with my desire;  
 To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,  
 In the loved presence of my cottage-fire,  
 And listen to the flapping of the flame,  
 Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

(1806)

## SLEEP

A FLOCK of sheep that leisurely pass by,  
 One after one; the sound of rain, and bees  
 Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,  
 Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;  
 I have thought of all by turns, and yet do lie  
 Sleepless! and soon the small birds' melodies  
 Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees;  
 And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.  
 Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,  
 And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth:  
 So do not let me wear to-night away:  
 Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth?  
 Come, blessed barrier between day and day,  
 Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

(1806)

INSIDE OF KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL,  
CAMBRIDGE

TAX not the royal Saint with vain expense,  
 With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned—  
 Albeit labouring for a scanty band  
 Of white-robed Scholars only—this immense  
 And glorious Work of fine intelligence!  
 Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore  
 Of nicely-calculated less or more;

*Royal Saint.* Henry VI., founder of the College.

So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense  
 These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof  
 Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,  
 Where light and shade repose, where music dwells  
 Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die;  
 Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof  
 That they were born for immortality.

(1822)

“ GRIEF, THOU HAST LOST AN EVER-  
 READY FRIEND ”

GRIEF, thou hast lost an ever-ready friend  
 Now that the cottage Spinning-wheel is mute;  
 And Care—a comforter that best could suit  
 Her foward mood, and softliest reprehend;  
 And Love—a charmer's voice, that used to lend,  
 More efficaciously than aught that flows  
 From harp or lute, kind influence to compose  
 The throbbing pulse—else troubled without end:  
 Even Joy could tell, Joy craving truce and rest  
 From her own overflow, what power sedate  
 On those revolving motions did await  
 Assiduously—to soothe her aching breast;  
 And, to a point of just relief, abate  
 The mantling triumphs of a day too blest.

(1819)

ON THE PROJECTED KENDAL AND  
WINDERMERE RAILWAY

Is then no nook of English ground secure  
From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown  
In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure  
As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,  
Must perish;—how can they this blight endure?  
And must he too the ruthless change bemoan  
Who scorns a false utilitarian lure  
'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?  
Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orresthead  
Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance:  
Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance  
Of nature; and, if human hearts be dead,  
Speak, passing winds; ye torrents, with your strong  
And constant voice, protest against the wrong.

(12th October, 1844)

## “SCORN NOT THE SONNET”

SCORN not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,  
Mindless of its just honours; with this key  
Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody  
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;  
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;  
With it Camöens soothed an exile's grief;  
The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf

Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned  
 His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,  
 It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faeryland  
 To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp  
 Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand  
 The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew  
 Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

(1827)

## ODE

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS  
 OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

## I

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
 The earth, and every common sight,  
 To me did seem  
 Apparelléd in celestial light,  
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
 It is not now as it hath been of yore;—  
 Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
 By night or day,  
 The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

## II

The Rainbow comes and goes,  
 And lovely is the Rose,  
 The Moon doth with delight  
 Look round her when the heavens are bare,

Waters on a starry night  
 Are beautiful and fair;  
 The sunshine is a glorious birth;  
 But yet I know, where'er I go,  
 That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

## III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,

And while the young lambs bound  
 As to the tabor's sound,

To me alone there came a thought of grief.

A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
 And I again am strong:

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;  
 No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;  
 I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,  
 The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

And all the earth is gay;

Land and sea

Give themselves up to jollity,

And with the heart of May

Doth every Beast keep holiday;—

Thou Child of Joy,

Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou  
 happy Shepherd-boy!

## IV

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call

Ye to each other make; I see

The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;

My heart is at your festival,  
 My head hath its coronal,  
 The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.  
 Oh evil day! if I were sullen  
 While Earth herself is adorning,  
 This sweet May-morning,  
 And the Children are culling  
 On every side,  
 In a thousand valleys far and wide,  
 Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,  
 And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm  
 I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!  
 —But there's a Tree, of many, one,  
 A single Field which I have looked upon,  
 Both of them speak of something that is gon  
 The Pansy at my feet  
 Doth the same tale repeat:  
 Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
 Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

## v

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
 And cometh from afar:  
 Not in entire forgetfulness,  
 And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
 From God, who is our home:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
     Upon the growing Boy,  
 But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
     He sees it in his joy;  
 The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
     Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
     And by the vision splendid  
     Is on his way attended;  
 At length the Man perceives it die away,  
 And fade into the light of common day.

## VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;  
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
 And, even with something of a Mother's mind,  
     And no unworthy aim,  
     The homely Nurse doth all she can  
 To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,  
     Forget the glories he hath known,  
 And that imperial palace whence he came.

## VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,  
 A six years' Darling of a pigmy size !  
 See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,  
 Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,  
 With light upon him from his father's eyes !

See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,  
 Some fragment from his dream of human life  
 Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;  
 A wedding or a festival,  
 A mourning or a funeral;  
 And this hath now his heart,  
 And unto this he frames his song:  
 Then will he fit his tongue  
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife;  
 But it will not be long  
 Ere this be thrown aside,  
 And with new joy and pride  
 The little Actor cons another part;  
 Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"  
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,  
 That Life brings with her in her equipage;  
 As if his whole vocation  
 Were endless imitation.

## VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
 Thy Soul's immensity;  
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep  
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,  
 Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—  
 Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!  
 On whom those truths do rest,  
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find,

In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;  
Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,  
A Presence which is not to be put by;  
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might  
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?  
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

## IX

O joy! that in our embers  
Is something that doth live,  
That nature yet remembers  
What was so fugitive!  
The thought of our past years in me doth breed  
Perpetual benediction: not indeed  
For that which is most worthy to be blest—  
Delight and liberty, the simple creed  
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,  
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his  
breast:—  
Not for these I raise  
The song of thanks and praise;  
But for those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,

Fallings from us, vanishings;  
 Blank misgivings of a Creature  
 Moving about in worlds not realised,  
 High instincts before which our mortal Nature  
 Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:  
 But for those first affections,  
 Those shadowy recollections,  
 Which, be they what they may,  
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,  
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing;  
 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
 Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,  
 To perish never;  
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,  
 Nor Man nor Boy,  
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy,  
 Can utterly abolish or destroy!  
 Hence in a season of calm weather  
 Though inland far we be,  
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea  
 Which brought us hither,  
 Can in a moment travel thither,  
 And see the Children sport upon the shore,'  
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

## X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!  
 And let the young Lambs bound  
 As to the tabor's sound!

We in thought will join your throng,  
 Ye that pipe and ye that play,  
 Ye that through your hearts to-day  
 Feel the gladness of the May!

What though the radiance which was once so bright  
 Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
 Though nothing can bring back the hour  
 Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;

We will grieve not, rather find  
 Strength in what remains behind;  
 In the primal sympathy  
 Which having been must ever be;  
 In the soothing thoughts that spring  
 Out of human suffering;  
 In the faith that looks through death,  
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

## XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,  
 Forebode not any severing of our loves!  
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;  
 I only have relinquished one delight  
 To live beneath your more habitual sway.  
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,  
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;  
 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day  
 Is lovely yet;  
 The Clouds that gather round the setting sun  
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye

That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;  
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.  
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

(1803-6)





## PART III

### "I GRIEVED FOR BUONAPARTE"

I GRIEVED for Buonaparté, with a vain  
And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood  
Of that Man's mind—what can it be? what food  
Fed his first hopes? what knowledge could *he* gain?  
'Tis not in battles that from youth we train  
The Governor who must be wise and good,  
And temper with the sternness of the brain  
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.  
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:  
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk  
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk  
Of the mind's business: these are the degrees  
By which true Sway doth mount; this is the stalk  
True Power doth grow on; and her rights are these.

{1802}

### ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC

ONCE did She hold the gorgeous east in fee;  
And was the safeguard of the west: the worth  
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,  
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.

She was a maiden City, bright and free;  
 No guile seduced, no force could violate;  
 And, when she took unto herself a Mate,  
 She must espouse the everlasting Sea.  
 And what if she had seen those glories fade,  
 Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;  
 Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid  
 When her long life hath reached its final day:  
 Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade  
 Of that which once was great, is passed away.

(1802)

## TO TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE

TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy man of men!  
 Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough  
 Within thy hearing, or thy head be now  
 Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den;—  
 O miserable Chieftain! where and when  
 Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou  
 Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:  
 Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,  
 Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind  
 Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and  
 skies;  
 There's not a breathing of the common wind  
 That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;  
 Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
 And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

(1802)

## NEAR DOVER, SEPTEMBER 1802

INLAND, within a hollow vale, I stood;  
And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,  
The coast of France—the coast of France how near!  
Drawn almost into frightful neighbourhood.  
I shrunk; for verily the barrier flood  
Was like a lake, or river bright and fair,  
A span of waters; yet what power is there!  
What mightiness for evil and for good!  
Even so doth God protect us if we be  
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll,  
Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity;  
Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree  
Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul  
Only, the Nations shall be great and free.

## WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER 1802

O FRIEND! I know not which way I must look  
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest,  
To think that now our life is only drest  
For show; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,  
Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook  
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:  
The wealthiest man among us is the best:  
No grandeur now in nature or in book  
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,

This is idolatry; and these we adore:  
 Plain living and high thinking are no more:  
 The homely beauty of the good old cause  
 Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,  
 And pure religion breathing household laws.

### MILTON

MILTON! thou should'st be living at this hour:  
 England hath need of thee: she is a fen  
 Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,  
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower  
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;  
 Oh! raise us up, return to us again;  
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:  
 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:  
 Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
 So didst thou travel on life's common way,  
 In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

(1802)

### " IT IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF "

IT is not to be thought of that the Flood  
 Of British freedom, which, to the open sea  
 Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity  
 Hath flowed, " with pomp of waters, unwithstood,"

Roused though it be full often to a mood  
 Which spurns the check of salutary bands,  
 That this most famous Stream in bogs and sands  
 Should perish; and to evil and to good  
 Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung  
 Armoury of the invincible Knights of old:  
 We must be free or die, who speak the tongue  
 That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold  
 Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung  
 Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

(1802)

## “ WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY ”

WHEN I have borne in memory what has tamed  
 Great Nations, how ennobling thoughts depart  
 When men change swords for ledgers, and desert  
 The student's bower for gold, some fears unnamed  
 I had, my Country!—am I to be blamed?  
 Now, when I think of thee, and what thou art,  
 Verily, in the bottom of my heart,  
 Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed.  
 For dearly must we prize thee; we who find  
 In thee a bulwark for the cause of men:  
 And I by my affection was beguiled:  
 What wonder if a Poet now and then,  
 Among the many movements of his mind,  
 Felt for thee as a lover or a child!

(1802)

## "ENGLAND! THE TIME IS COME"

ENGLAND! the time is come when thou should'st  
wean

Thy heart from its emasculating food;  
The truth should now be better understood;  
Old things have been unsettled; we have seen  
Fair seed-time, better harvest might have been  
But for thy trespasses; and, at this day,  
If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa,  
Aught good were destined, thou would'st step  
between.

England! all nations is this charge agree:  
But worse, more ignorant in love and hate,  
Far—far more abject, is thine Enemy:  
Therefore the wise pray for thee, though the freight  
Of thy offences be a heavy weight:  
Oh grief that Earth's best hopes rest all with Thee!

(1803)

## LINES ON THE EXPECTED INVASION, 1803

COME ye—who, if (which Heaven avert!) the Land  
Were with herself at strife, would take your stand,  
Like gallant Falkland, by the Monarch's side,  
And, like Montrose, make Loyalty your pride—  
Come ye—who, not less zealous, might display  
Banners at enmity with regal sway,  
And, like the Pyms and Miltos of that day,  
Think that a State would live in sounder health

If Kingship bowed its head to Commonwealth—  
Ye too—whom no discreditable fear  
Would keep, perhaps with many a fruitless tear,  
Uncertain what to choose and how to steer—  
And ye—who might mistake for sober sense  
And wise reserve the plea of indolence—  
Come ye—whate'er your creed—O waken all,  
Whate'er your temper, at your Country's call;  
Resolving (this a free-born Nation can)  
To have one Soul, and perish to a man,  
Or save this honoured Land from every Lord  
But British reason and the British sword.

## NOVEMBER 1806

ANOTHER year!—another deadly blow!  
Another mighty Empire overthrown!  
And We are left, or shall be left, alone;  
The last that dare to struggle with the Foe.  
'Tis well! from this day forward we shall know  
That in ourselves our safety must be sought;  
That by our own right hands it must be wrought;  
That we must stand unpropred, or be laid low.  
O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer!  
We shall exult, if they who rule the land  
Be men who hold its many blessings dear,  
Wise, upright, valiant; not a servile band,  
Who are to judge of danger which they fear,  
And honour which they do not understand.

**"THE POWER OF ARMIES IS A VISIBLE THING"**

THE power of Armies is a visible thing,  
 Formal, and circumscribed in time and space;  
 But who the limits of that power shall trace  
 Which a brave People into light can bring  
 Or hide, at will,—for freedom combating  
 By just revenge inflamed? No foot may chase,  
 No eye can follow, to a fatal place  
 That power, that spirit, whether on the wing  
 Like the strong wind, or sleeping like the wind  
 Within its awful caves.—From year to year  
 Springs this indigenous produce far and near;  
 No craft this subtle element can bind,  
 Rising like water from the soil, to find  
 In every nook a lip that it may cheer.

(1811)

**CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WARRIOR**

WHO is the happy Warrior? Who is he  
 That every man in arms should wish to be?  
 —It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought  
 Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought  
 Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:  
 Whose high endeavours are an inward light  
 That makes the path before him always bright:-

Who, with a natural instinct to discern  
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn;  
Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,  
But makes his moral being his prime care;  
Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,  
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!  
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;  
In face of these doth exercise a power  
Which is our human nature's highest dower;  
Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves  
Of their bad influence, and their good receives:  
By objects, which might force the soul to abate  
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate;  
Is placable—because occasions rise  
So often that demand such sacrifice;  
More skilful in self-knowledge, even more pure,  
As tempted more; more able to endure,  
As more exposed to suffering and distress;  
Thence, also, more alive to tenderness.  
—'Tis he whose law is reason; who depends  
Upon that law as on the best of friends;  
Whence, in a state where men are tempted still  
To evil for a guard against worse ill,  
And what in quality or act is best  
Doth seldom on a right foundation rest,  
He labours good on good to fix, and owes  
To virtue every triumph that he knows:  
—Who, if he rise to station of command,  
Rises by open means; and there will stand  
On honourable terms, or else retire,

And in himself possess his own desire;  
 Who comprehends his trust, and to the same  
 Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim:  
 And therefore does not stoop, nor lie in wait  
 For wealth, or honours, or for worldly state;  
 Whom they must follow; on whose head must fall,  
 Like showers of manna, if they come at all:  
 Whose powers shed round him in the common  
 strife,  
 Or mild concerns of ordinary life,  
 A constant influence, a peculiar grace;  
 But who, if he be called upon to face  
 Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined  
 Great issues, good or bad for human kind,  
 Is happy as a Lover; and attired  
 With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired;  
 And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law .  
 In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw;  
 Or if an unexpected call succeed,  
 Come when it will, is equal to the need:  
 —He who, though thus endued as with a sense  
 And faculty for storm and turbulence,  
 Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans  
 To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;  
 Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,  
 Are at his heart; and such fidelity  
 It is his darling passion to approve;  
 More brave for this, that he hath much to love.—  
 'Tis, finally, the Man, who, lifted high,  
 Conspicuous object in a Nation's eye,

# THE HAPPY WARRIOR

145

Or left unthought-of in obscurity,—  
Who, with a toward or untoward lot,  
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not—  
Plays, in the many games of life, that one  
Where what he most doth value must be won:  
Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,  
Nor thought of tender happiness betray;  
Who, not content that former worth stand fast,  
Looks forward, persevering to the last,  
From well to better, daily self-surpast:  
Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth  
For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,  
Or he must fall, to sleep without his fame,  
And leave a dead unprofitable name—  
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;  
And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws  
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause:  
This is the happy Warrior; this is He  
That every Man in arms should wish to be.

(1806)





## SELECTIONS FROM "THE PRELUDE"

### I

WORDSWORTH was born at Cockermouth in 1770, and at the age of eight went to school at Hawkshead, a minute country town with an ancient Grammar School, on the little lake of Esthwaite, some six miles from Ambleside and Windermere. The following passage from Book I. relates to Hawkshead and school-time.

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
Like harmony in music; there is a dark  
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, makes them cling together  
In one society. How strange, that all  
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,  
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused  
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,  
And that a needful part, in making up  
The calm existence that is mine when I  
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!  
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to  
employ;  
Whether her fearless visitings, or those

That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light  
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she would use  
Severer interventions, ministry  
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found  
A little boat tied to a willow tree  
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.  
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in  
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth  
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice  
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;  
Leaving behind her still, on either side,  
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,  
Until they melted all into one track  
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,  
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point  
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view  
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,  
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above  
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.  
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily  
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,  
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat  
Went heaving through the water like a swan;  
When, from behind that craggy steep till then  
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,  
And growing still in stature the grim shape

Towered up between me and the stars, and still,  
 For so it seemed, with purpose of its own  
 And measured motion like a living thing,  
 Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,  
 And through the silent water stole my way  
 Back to the covert of the willow tree;  
 There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—  
 And through the meadows homeward went, in grave  
 And serious mood; but after I had seen  
 That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
 Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
 Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts  
 There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
 Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes  
 Remained, no pleasant images of trees,  
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;  
 But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
 Like living men, moved slowly through the mind  
 By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!  
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought  
 That givest to forms and images a breath  
 And everlasting motion, not in vain  
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn  
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
 The passions that build up our human soul;  
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,  
 But with high objects, with enduring things—  
 With life and nature—purifying thus

The elements of feeling and of thought,  
And sanctifying, by such discipline,  
Both pain and fear, until we recognise  
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.  
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me  
With stinted kindness. In November days,  
When vapours rolling down the valley made  
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,  
At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,  
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,  
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went  
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;  
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,  
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun  
Was set, and visible for many a mile  
The cottage windows blazed through twilight  
gloom,  
I heeded not their summons: happy time  
It was indeed for all of us—for me  
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud  
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,  
Proud and exulting like an untired horse  
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,  
We hissed along the polished ice in games  
Confederate, imitative of the chase  
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,  
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.  
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,

And not a voice was idle; with the din  
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;  
The leafless trees and every icy crag  
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills  
Into the tumult sent an alien sound  
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars  
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west  
The orange sky of evening died away.  
Not seldom from the uproar I retired  
Into a silent bay, or sportively  
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,  
To cut across the reflex of a star  
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed  
Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,  
When we had given our bodies to the wind,  
And all the shadowy banks on either side  
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still  
The rapid line of motion, then at once  
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,  
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs  
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled  
With visible motion her diurnal round!  
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,  
Feebler and feeble, and I stood and watched  
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

## II

From Book V., illustrating the other side of Wordsworth's education.

A precious treasure had I long possessed,  
A little yellow, canvas-covered book,  
A slender abstract of the Arabian tales;  
And, from companions in a new abode,  
When first I learnt, that this dear prize of mine  
Was but a block hewn from a mighty quarry—  
That there were four large volumes, laden all  
With kindred matter, 'twas to me, in truth,  
A promise scarcely earthly. Instantly,  
With one not richer than myself, I made  
A covenant that each should lay aside  
The moneys he possessed, and hoard up more,  
Till our joint savings had amassed enough  
To make this book our own. Through several  
months,  
In spite of all temptation, we preserved  
Religiously that vow; but firmness failed,  
Nor were we ever masters of our wish.

And when thereafter to my father's house  
The holidays returned me, there to find  
That golden store of books which I had left,  
What joy was mine! How often in the course  
Of those glad respites, though a soft west wind  
Ruffled with waters to the angler's wish,  
For a whole day together, have I lain

Down by thy side, O Derwent! murmuring stream,  
 On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,  
 And there have read, devouring as I read,  
 Defrauding the day's glory, desperate!  
 Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,  
 Such as an idler deals with in his shame,  
 I to the sport betook myself again.

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,  
 And o'er the heart of man; invisibly  
 It comes, to works of unreproved delight,  
 And tendency benign, directing those  
 Who care not, know not, think not, what they do.  
 The tales that charm away the wakeful night  
 In Araby, romances; legends penned  
 For solace by dim light of monkish lamps;  
 Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised  
 By youthful squires, adventures endless, spun  
 By the dismantled warrior in old age,  
 Out of the bowels of those very schemes  
 In which his youth did first extravagate;  
 These spread like day, and something in the shape  
 Of these will live till man shall be no more.  
 Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,  
 And *they must* have their food. Our childhood sits,  
 Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne  
 That hath more power than all the elements.  
 I guess not what this tells of Being past,  
 Nor what it augurs of the life to come;  
 But so it is; and, in that dubious hour—

That twilight—when we first begin to see  
This dawning earth, to recognise, expect,  
And, in the long probation that ensues,  
The time of trial, ere we learn to live  
In reconciliation with our stinted powers;  
To endure this state of meagre vassalage,  
Unwilling to forego, confess, submit,  
Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows  
To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed  
And humbled down—oh! then we feel, we feel,  
We know where we have friends. Ye dreamers, then,  
Forgers of daring tales! we bless you then,  
Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape  
Philosophy will call you: *then* we feel  
With what, and how great might ye are in league,  
Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed,  
An empire, a possession,—ye whom time  
And seasons serve; all Faculties to whom  
Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay,  
Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,  
Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

## III

Two vivid memories of childhood, one of them connected with his father's death, which occurred when Wordsworth was ten. From Book XII.

There are in our existence spots of time,  
That with distinct pre-eminence retain  
A renovating virtue, whence—depressed

By false opinion and contentious thought,  
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,  
In trivial occupations, and the round  
Of ordinary intercourse—our minds  
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;  
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,  
That penetrates, enables us to mount.  
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.  
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks  
Among those passages of life that give  
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,  
The mind is lord and master—outward sense  
The obedient servant of her will. Such moments  
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date  
From our first childhood. I remember well,  
That once, while yet my inexperienced hand  
Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes  
I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills:  
An ancient servant of my father's house  
Was with me, my encourager and guide:  
We had not travelled long, ere some mischance  
Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through  
fear  
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor  
I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length  
Came to a bottom, where in former times  
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.  
The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones  
And iron cask were gone; but on the turf,  
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,

Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.

The monumental letters were inscribed  
In times long past; but still, from year to year  
By superstition of the neighbourhood,  
The grass is cleared away, and to this hour  
The characters are fresh and visible:  
A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,  
Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road:  
Then, reascending the bare common, saw  
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,  
The beacon on the summit, and, more near,  
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,  
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way  
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,  
An ordinary sight; but I should need  
Colours and words that are unknown to man,  
To paint the visionary dreariness  
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,  
Invested moorland waste and naked pool,  
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,  
The female and her garments vexed and tossed  
By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours  
Of early love, the loved one at my side,  
I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,  
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,  
And on the melancholy beacon, fell  
A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam;  
And think ye not with radiance more sublime  
For these remembrances, and for the power

They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid  
Of feeling, and diversity of strength  
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.  
Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth  
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see  
In simple childhood something of the base  
On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel,  
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,  
Else never canst receiye. The days gone by  
Return upon me almost from the dawn  
Of life: the hiding-places of man's power  
Open; I would approach them, but they close,  
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,  
May scarcely see at all; and I would give,  
While yet we may, as far as words can give,  
Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,  
Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past  
For future restoration.—Yet another  
Of these memorials:—

One Christmas-time,

On the glad eve of its dear holidays,  
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth  
Into the fields, impatient for the sight  
Of those led palfreys that should bear us home  
My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,  
That, from the meeting-point of two highways  
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched,  
Thither, uncertain on which road to fix  
My expectation, thither I repaired,  
Scout-like, and gained the summit; 'twas a day

Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass  
I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall;  
Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,  
Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood;  
With those companions at my side, I watched,  
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist  
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse  
And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—  
That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days  
Sojourners in my father's house, he died;  
And I and my three brothers, orphans then,  
Followed his body to the grave. The event,  
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared  
A chastisement; and when I called to mind  
That day so lately past, when from the crag  
I looked in such anxiety of hope;  
With trite reflections of morality,  
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low  
To God, Who thus corrected my desires;  
And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,  
And all the business of the elements,  
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,  
And the bleak music from that old stone wall,  
The noise of wood and water, and the mist  
That on the line of each of those two roads  
Advanced in such indisputable shapes;  
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds  
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,  
As at a fountain; and on winter nights,  
Down to this very time, when storm and rain

Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,  
 While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,  
 Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock  
 In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,  
 Some inward agitations thence are brought,  
 Whate'er their office, whether to beguile  
 Thoughts over busy in the course they took,  
 Or animate an hour of vacant ease.

## IV

Wordsworth went into residence at St. John's College, Cambridge, at the age of seventeen. What follows is the opening of Book III.

It was a dreary morning when the wheels  
 Rolled over a wide plain o'erhung with clouds,  
 And nothing cheered our way till first we saw  
 The long-roofed chapel of King's College lift  
 Turrets and pinnacles in answering files,  
 Extended high above a dusky grove.

Advancing, we espied upon the road  
 A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap,  
 Striding along as if o'ertasked by Time,  
 Or covetous of exercise and air;  
 He passed—nor was I master of my eyes  
 Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.  
 As near and nearer to the spot we drew,  
 It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.

Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,  
While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam;  
And at the *Hoop* alighted, famous Inn.

My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope;  
Some friends I had, acquaintances who there  
Seemed friends, poor simple schoolboys, now hung  
round

With honour and importance: in a world  
Of welcome faces up and down I roved;  
Questions, directions, warnings and advice,  
Flowed in upon me, from all sides; fresh day  
Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed  
A man of business and expense, and went  
From shop to shop about my own affairs,  
To Tutor or to Tailor, as befell,  
From street to street with loose and careless mind.

I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed  
Delighted through the motley spectacle;  
Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,  
Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways,  
towers:

Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,  
A northern villager.

As if the change

Had waited on some Fairy's 'wand, at once  
Behold me rich in monies, and attired  
In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair  
Powdered like rimey trees, when frost is keen.

My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,  
 With other signs of manhood that supplied  
 The lack of beard.—The weeks went roundly on  
 With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,  
 Smooth housekeeping within, and all without  
 Liberal, and suiting gentleman's array.

The Evangelist St. John my patron was:  
 Three Gothic courts are his, and in the first  
 Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure;  
 Right underneath, the College kitchens made  
 A humming sound, less tuneable than bees,  
 But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes  
 Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.  
 Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,  
 Who never let the quarters, night or day,  
 Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours  
 Twice over with a male and female voice.  
 Her pealing organ was my neighbour too;  
 And from my pillow, looking forth by light  
 Of moon or favouring stars, I could behold  
 The antechapel where the statue stood  
 Of Newton with his prism and silent face,  
 The marble index of a mind for ever  
 Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Of College labours, of the Lecturer's room,  
 All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,  
 With loyal students, faithful to their books,  
 Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,

And honest dunces—of important days,  
Examinations, when the man was weighed  
As in a balance! of excessive hopes,  
Tremblings withal and commendable fears,  
Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad—  
Let others that know more speak as they know.  
Such glory was but little sought by me,  
And little won. Yet from the first crude days  
Of settling time in this untried abode,  
I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts,  
Wishing to hope without a hope, some fears  
About my future worldly maintenance,  
And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind,  
A feeling that I was not for that hour,  
Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down?  
For (not to speak of Reason and her pure  
Reflective acts to fix the moral law  
Deep in the conscience, nor of Christian Hope,  
Bowing her head before her sister Faith  
As one far mightier), hither I had come,  
Bear witness Truth, endowed with holy powers  
And faculties, whether to work or feel.  
Oft when the dazzling show no longer new  
Had ceased to dazzle, oftentimes did I quit  
My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves,  
And as I paced alone the level fields  
Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime  
With which I had been conversant, the mind  
Drooped not; but there into herself returning,  
With prompt rebound seemed fresh as heretofore.

At least I more distinctly recognised  
Her native instincts: let me dare to speak  
A higher language, say that now I felt  
What independent solaces were mine,  
To mitigate the injurious sway of place,  
Or circumstance, how far soever changed  
In youth, or *to be* changed in after years.  
As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,  
I looked for universal things: perused  
The common countenance of earth and sky:  
Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace  
Of that first Paradise whence man was driven;  
And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed  
By the proud name she bears—the name of Heaven.  
I called on both to teach me what they might;  
Or, turning the mind in upon herself,  
Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my  
thoughts  
And spread them with a wider creeping; felt  
Incumbencies more awful, visitings  
Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,  
That tolerates the indignities of Time,  
And, from the centre of Eternity  
All finite motions overruling, lives  
In glory immutable. But peace! enough  
Here to record that I was mounting now  
To such community with highest truth—  
A track pursuing, not untrod before,  
From strict analogies by thought supplied  
Or consciousnesses not to be subdued.

To every natural form, rock, fruits, or flower,  
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,  
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,  
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass  
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all  
That I beheld respiration with inward meaning.  
Add that whate'er of Terror or of Love  
Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on  
From transitory passion, unto this  
I was as sensitive as waters are  
To the sky's influence in a kindred mood  
Of passion; was obedient as a lute  
That waits upon the touches of the wind.  
Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich—  
I had a world about me—'twas my own;  
I made it, for it only lived to me,  
And to the God who sees into the heart.  
Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed  
By outward gestures and by visible looks:  
Some called it madness—so indeed it was,  
If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy,  
If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured  
To inspiration, sort with such a name;  
If prophecy be madness; if things viewed  
By poets in old time, and higher up  
By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,  
May in these tutored days no more be seen  
With undisordered sight. But leaving this,  
It was no madness, for the bodily eye  
Amid my strongest workings evermore

Was searching out the lines of difference  
 As they lie hid in all external forms,  
 Near or remote, minute or vast; an eye  
 Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,  
 To the broad ocean and the azure heavens  
 Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,  
 Could find no surface where its power might sleep;  
 Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,  
 And by an unrelenting agency  
 Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

## v

The following passage from Book IV. belongs to the time of Wordsworth's first "long vacation."

When from our better selves we have too long  
 Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,  
 Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,  
 How gracious, how benign, is Solitude;  
 How potent a mere image of her sway;  
 Most potent when impressed upon the mind  
 With an appropriate human centre—hermit,  
 Deep in the bosom of the wilderness;  
 Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot  
 Is treading, where no other face is seen)  
 Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top  
 Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves;  
 Or as the soul of that great Power is met  
 Sometimes embodied on a public road,

When, for the night deserted, it assumes  
A character of quiet more profound  
Than pathless wastes.

Once, when those summer months  
Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show  
Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,  
Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced  
That—after I had left a flower-decked room  
(Whose in-door pastime, lighted up, survived  
To a late hour), and spirits overwrought  
Were making night do penance for a day  
Spent in a round of strenuous idleness—  
My homeward course led up a long ascent,  
Where the road's watery surface, to the top  
Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon  
And bore the semblance of another stream  
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook  
That murmured in the vale. All else was still;  
No living thing appeared in earth or air,  
And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,  
Sound there was none—but, lo! an uncouth shape,  
Shown by a sudden turning of the road,  
So near that, slipping back into the shade  
Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,  
Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,  
A span above man's common measure, tall,  
Stiff, lank, and upright; a more meagre man  
Was never seen before by night or day.  
Long were his arms, pallid his hands; his mouth  
Looked ghastly in the moonlight: from behind,

A mile-stone propped him; I could also ken  
That he was clothed in military garb,  
Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,  
No dog attending, by no staff sustained,  
He stood, and in his very dress appeared  
A desolation, a simplicity,  
To which the trappings of a gaudy world  
Make a strange back-ground. From his lips, ere long,  
Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain  
Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form  
Kept the same awful steadiness—at his feet  
His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame  
Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length  
Subduing my heart's specious cowardice,  
I left the shady nook where I had stood  
And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place  
He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm  
In measured gesture lifted to his head  
Returned my salutation; then resumed  
His station as before; and when I asked  
His history, the veteran, in reply,  
Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved,  
And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,  
A stately air of mild indifference,  
He told in few plain words a soldier's tale—  
That in the Tropic Islands he had served,  
Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past;  
That on his landing he had been dismissed,  
And now was travelling towards his native home.  
This heard, I said, in pity, "Come with me."

He stooped, and straightway from the ground  
    took up  
An oaken staff by me yet unobserved—  
A staff which must have dropped from his slack  
    hand  
And lay till now neglected in the grass.  
Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared  
To travel without pain, and I beheld,  
With an astonishment but ill suppressed,  
His ghostly figure moving at my side;  
Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear  
To turn from present hardships to the past,  
And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,  
Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared,  
On what he might himself have seen or felt.  
He all the while was in demeanour calm,  
Concise in answer; solemn and sublime  
He might have seemed, but that in all he said  
There was a strange half-absence, as of one  
Knowing too well the importance of his theme,  
But feeling it no longer. Our discourse  
Soon ended, and together on we passed  
In silence through a wood gloomy and still.  
Up-turning, then, along an open field,  
We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked,  
And earnestly to charitable care  
Commended him as a poor friendless man,  
Belated and by sickness overcome.  
Assured that now the traveller would repose  
In comfort, I entreated that henceforth

He would not linger in the public ways,  
 But ask for timely furtherance and help  
 Such as his state required. At this reproof,  
 With the same ghastly mildness in his look,  
 He said, " My trust is in the God of Heaven,  
 And in the eye of him who passes me! "

The cottage door was speedily unbarred,  
 And now the soldier touched his hat once more  
 With his lean hand, and in a faltering voice,  
 Whose tone bespake reviving interests  
 Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned  
 The farewell blessing of the patient man,  
 And so we parted. Back I cast a look,  
 And lingered near the door a little space,  
 Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

## VI

After leaving Cambridge, Wordsworth went abroad with a friend in 1790. As these two extracts from Book VI. show, the deepest impression brought home was from Nature rather than Man.

When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb  
 Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road,  
 Following a band of muleteers, we reached  
 A halting-place, where all together took  
 Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our guide,  
 Leaving us at the board; awhile we lingered,

Then paced the beaten downward way that led  
Right to a rough stream's edge, and there broke off;  
The only track now visible was one  
That from the torrent's further brink held forth  
Conspicuous invitation to ascend  
A lofty mountain. After brief delay  
Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took,  
And climb with eagerness, till anxious fears  
Intruded, for we failed to overtake  
Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,  
While every moment added doubt to doubt,  
A peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned  
That to the spot which had perplexed us first  
We must descend, and there should find the road,  
Which in the stony channel of the stream  
Lay a few steps, and then along its banks;  
And, that our future course, all plain to sight,  
Was downwards, with the current of that stream.  
Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,  
For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,  
We questioned him again, and yet again;  
But every word that from the peasant's lips  
Came in reply, translated by our feelings,  
Ended in this,—*that we had crossed the Alps.*

Imagination—here the Power so called  
Through sad incompetence of human speech,  
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss  
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,  
At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;

Halted without an effort to break through;  
 But to my conscious soul I now can say—  
 “I recognise thy glory:” in such strength  
 Of usurpation, when the light of sense  
 Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed  
 The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,  
 There harbours; whether we be young or old,  
 Our destiny, our being’s heart and home,  
 Is with infinitude, and only there;  
 With hope it is, hope that can never die,  
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,  
 And something evermore about to be.  
 Under such banners militant, the soul  
 Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils  
 That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts  
 That are their own perfection and reward,  
 Strong in herself and in beatitude  
 That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile  
 Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds  
 To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

The melancholy slackening that ensued  
 Upon those tidings by the peasant given  
 Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,  
 And, with the half-shaped road which we had missed,  
 Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road  
 Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait,  
 And with them did we journey several hours  
 At a slow pace. The immeasurable height  
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,

The stationary blasts of waterfalls,  
And in the narrow rent at every turn  
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,  
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,  
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,  
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side  
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight  
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,  
The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,  
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—  
Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity,  
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

That night our lodging was a house that stood  
Alone within the valley, at a point  
Where, tumbling from aloft, a torrent swelled  
The rapid stream whose margin we had trod;  
A dreary mansion, large beyond all need,  
With high and spacious rooms, deafened and  
stunned  
By noise of waters, making innocent sleep  
Lie melancholy among weary bones.

Oh, most belovèd Friend! a glorious time,  
A happy time that was; triumphant looks  
Were then the common language of all eyes;

As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed  
Their great expectancy: the fife of war  
Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,  
A blackbird's whistle in a budding grove.  
We left the Swiss exulting in the fate  
Of their near neighbours; and, when shortening  
fast

Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,  
We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret  
For battle in the cause of Liberty.

A stripling, scarcely of the household then  
Of social life, I looked upon these things  
As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,  
Was touched, but with no intimate concern;  
I seemed to move along them, as a bird  
Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues  
Its sport, or feeds in its proper element;  
I wanted not that joy, I did not need  
Such help; the ever-living universe,  
Turn where I might, was opening out its glories,  
And the independent spirit of pure youth  
Called forth, at every season, new delights,  
Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green  
fields.

## VII

Wordsworth went to France again in November, 1791, and spent a year there, first at Tours and then at Paris. He became absorbed in revolutionary politics, with results that permanently affected his whole outlook on life. The first two passages describe a friendship formed at Tours (Book IX.): the third, impressions in Paris after the September massacres. the fourth, the poet's return to England and his despair of the world of politics (Book X.).

Among that band of Officers was one,  
Already hinted at, of other mould—  
A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,  
And with an oriental loathing spurned,  
As of a different caste. A meeker man  
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,  
Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries  
Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then  
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,  
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,  
When foot hath crushed them. He through the  
events  
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,  
As through a book, an old romance, or tale  
Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought  
Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked  
With the most noble, but unto the poor  
Among mankind he was in service bound,

As by some tie invisible, oaths professed  
To a religious order. Man he loved  
As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,  
And all the homely in their homely works,  
Transferred a courtesy which had no air  
Of condescension; but did rather seem  
A passion and a gallantry, like that  
Which he, a soldier, in his idler day  
Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was,  
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,  
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy  
Diffused around him, while he was intent  
On works of love or freedom, or revolved  
Complacently the progress of a cause,  
Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek  
And placid, and took nothing from the man  
That was delightful. Oft in solitude  
With him did I discourse about the end  
Of civil government, and its wisest forms;  
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,  
Custom and habit, novelty and change;  
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few  
For patrimonial honour set apart,  
And ignorance in the labouring multitude.  
For he, to all intolerance indisposed,  
Balanced these contemplations in his mind;  
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped  
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment  
Than later days allowed; carried about me,  
With less alloy to its integrity,

The experience of past ages, as, through help  
Of books and common life, it makes sure way  
To youthful minds, by objects over near  
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled  
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

Yet not the less,  
Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one  
Is law for all, and of that barren pride  
In them who, by immunities unjust,  
Between the sovereign and the people stand,  
His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold  
Daily upon me, mixed with pity too  
And love; for where hope is, there love will be  
For the abject multitude. And when we chanced  
One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,  
Who crept along fitting her languid gait  
Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord  
Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane  
Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands  
Was busy knitting in a heartless mood  
Of solitude, and at the sight my friend  
In agitation said, "*'Tis against that*  
*That we are fighting," I with him believed*  
*That a benignant spirit was abroad*  
*Which might not be withstood, that poverty*  
*Abject as this would in a little time*  
*Be found no more, that we should see the earth*  
*Unthwarted in her wish to recompense*

The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,  
All institutes for ever blotted out  
That legalised exclusion, empty pomp  
Abolished, sensual state and cruel power  
Whether by edict of the one or few;  
And finally, as sum and crown of all,  
Should see the people having a strong hand  
In framing their own laws; whence better days  
To all mankind.

The State—as if to stamp the final seal  
On her security, and to the world  
Show what she was, a high and fearless soul,  
Exulting in defiance, or heart-stung  
By sharp resentment, or belike to taunt  
With spiteful gratitude the baffled League,  
That had stirred up her slackening faculties  
To a new transition—when the King was crushed,  
Spared not the empty throne, and in proud haste  
Assumed the body and venerable name  
Of a Republic. Lamentable crimes,  
'Tis true, had gone before this hour, dire work  
Of massacre, in which the senseless sword  
Was prayed to as a judge; but these were past,  
Earth free from them for ever, as was thought,—  
Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once!  
Things that could only show themselves and die.

Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned,  
And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,

The spacious city, and in progress passed  
The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,  
Associate with his children and his wife  
In bondage; and the palace, lately stormed  
With roar of cannon by a furious host.  
I crossed the square (an empty area then!)  
Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain  
The dead, upon the dying heaped, and gazed  
On this and other spots, as doth a man  
Upon a volume whose contents he knows  
Are memorable, but from him locked up,  
Being written in a tongue he cannot read,  
So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,  
And half upbraids their silence. But that night  
I felt most deeply in what world I was,  
What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.  
High was my room and lonely, near the roof  
Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge  
That would have pleased me in more quiet times;  
Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.  
With unextinguished taper I kept watch,  
Reading at intervals; the fear gone by  
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.

I thought of those September massacres,  
*The unhappy Monarch.* Louis XVI., imprisoned with his wife  
and children in the Temple, after the sack of the Tuilleries on  
10th August, 1792. He was executed in the following January.  
*September massacres.* A mob, stirred up by frenzied jour-  
nalists and orators, broke into the prisons and murdered over  
a thousand persons, most of whom had been imprisoned on  
the ground that they sympathised with the invading Prussians  
who were already on French soil.

Divided from me by one little month,  
Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up  
From tragic fictions or true history,  
Remembrances and dim admonishments.

The horse is taught his manage, and no star  
Of wildest course but treads back his own  
steps;

For the spent hurricane the air provides  
As fierce a successor; the tide retreats  
But to return out of its hiding-place  
In the great deep; all things have second birth;  
The earthquake is not satisfied at once;  
And in this way I wrought upon myself,  
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,  
To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance  
Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;  
But vainly comments of a calmer mind  
Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.  
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,  
Appeared unfit for the repose of night,  
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

I called to mind those truths  
That are the commonplaces of the schools—  
(A theme for boys, too hackneyed for their sires),  
Yet, with a revelation's liveliness,  
In all their comprehensive bearings known  
And visible to philosophers of old,  
Men who, to business of the world untrained,

Lived in the shade; and to Harmodius known  
And his compeer Aristogiton, known  
To Brutus—that tyrannic power is weak,  
Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,  
Nor the support of good or evil men  
To trust in; that the godhead which is ours  
Can never utterly be charmed or stilled;  
That nothing hath a natural right to last  
But equity and reason; that all else  
Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best  
Lives only by variety of disease.

Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts  
Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time  
But that the virtue of one paramount mind  
Would have abashed those impious crests—have  
quelled

Outrage and bloody power, and—in despite  
Of what the People long had been and were  
Through ignorance and false teaching, sadder proof  
Of immaturity, and—in the teeth  
Of desperate opposition from without—  
Have cleared a passage for just government,  
And left a solid birthright to the State,  
Redeemed, according to example given  
By ancient lawgivers.

In this frame of mind,

*Harmodius and Aristogiton.* Murderers of the Athenian  
tyrant Hipparchus in 514 B.C., and subsequently honoured  
as founders of the glorious Athenian Republic.

Dragged by a chain of harsh necessity,  
So seemed it,—now I thankfully acknowledge,  
Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven,  
To England I returned, else (though assured  
That I both was and must be of small weight,  
No better than a landsman on the deck  
Of a ship struggling with a hideous storm).  
Doubtless, I should have then made common cause  
With some who perished; haply perished too,  
A poor mistaken and bewildered offering,—  
Should to the breast of Nature have gone back  
With all my resolutions, all my hopes,  
A Poet only to myself, to men  
Useless, and even, beloved Friend! a soul  
To thee unknown!

Twice had the trees let fall  
Their leaves, as often Winter had put on  
His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge  
Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine  
Had caught the accents of my native speech  
Upon our native country's sacred ground.  
A patriot of the world, how could I glide  
Into communion with her sylvan shades,  
Erewhile my tuneful haunt? It pleased me more  
To abide in the great City, where I found  
The general air still busy with the stir  
Of that first memorable onset made  
By a strong levy of humanity  
Upon the traffickers in Negro blood;  
Effort which, though defeated, had recalled

To notice old forgotten principles,  
And through the nation spread a novel heat  
Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own  
That this particular strife had wanted power  
To rivet my affections; nor did now  
Its unsuccessful issue much excite  
My sorrow; for I brought with me the faith  
That, if France prospered, good men would not long  
Pay fruitless worship to humanity,  
And this most rotten branch of human shame,  
Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains  
Would fall together with its parent tree.  
What, then, were my emotions, when in arms  
Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,  
Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers!  
Not in my single self alone I found,  
But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,  
Change and subversion from that hour. No shock  
Given to my moral nature had I known  
Down to that very moment; neither lapse  
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named  
A revolution, save at this one time;  
All else was progress on the self-same path  
On which, with a diversity of pace,  
I had been travelling: this a stride at once  
Into another region. As a light  
And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze

*This particular strife.* England declared war on France in January, 1793. The principal cause was the French invasion of the Austrian Netherlands (now Belgium).

On some grey rock—its birth-place—so had I  
 Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower  
 Of my beloved country, wishing not  
 A happier fortune than to wither there:  
 Now was I from that pleasant station torn  
 And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,  
 Yea, afterwards—truth most painful to record!—  
 Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,  
 When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,  
 Left without glory on the field, or driven,  
 Brave hearts' to shameful flight. It was a grief,—  
 Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that,—  
 A conflict of sensations without name,  
 Of which *he* only, who may love the sight  
 Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,  
 When, in the congregation bending all  
 To their great Father, prayers were offered up,  
 Or praises for our country's victories;  
 And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance  
 I only, like an uninvited guest  
 Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,  
 Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

Oh! much have they to account for, who could  
 tear,  
 By violence, at one decisive rent,  
 From the best youth in England their dear pride,  
 Their joy, in England; this, too, at a time  
 In which worst losses easily might wean  
 The best of names, when patriotic love

Did of itself in modesty give way,  
Like the Precursor when the Deity  
Is come Whose harbinger he was; a time  
In which apostasy from ancient faith  
Seemed but conversion to a higher creed;  
Withal a season dangerous and wild,  
A time when sage Experience would have snatched  
Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose  
A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.

When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag  
In that unworthy service was prepared  
To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie,  
A brood of gallant creatures, on the deep;  
I saw them in their rest, a sojourner  
Through a whole month of calm and glassy days  
In that delightful island which protects  
Their place of convocation—there I heard,  
Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,  
A monitory sound that never failed,—  
The sunset cannon. While the orb went down  
In the tranquillity of nature, came  
That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me  
Without a spirit overcast by dark  
Imaginations, sense of woes to come,  
Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart.

In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends,  
Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad  
Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before

In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now;  
And thus, on every side beset with foes,  
The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few  
Spread into madness of the many; blasts  
From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.  
The sternness of the just, the faith of those  
Who doubted not that Providence had times  
Of vengeful retribution, theirs who throned  
The human Understanding paramount  
And made of that their God, the hopes of men  
Who were content to barter short-lived pangs  
For a paradise of ages, the blind rage  
Of insolent tempers, the light vanity  
Of intermeddlers, steady purposes  
Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,  
And all the accidents of life—were pressed  
Into one service, busy with one work.  
The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,  
Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared,  
Her frenzy only active to extol  
Past outrages, and shape the way for new,  
Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate.

Domestic carnage now filled the whole year  
With feast-days; old men from the chimney-nook,  
The maiden from the bosom of her love,  
The mother from the cradle of her babe,  
The warrior from the field—all perished, all—  
Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,  
Head after head, and never heads enough

For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,

They made it proudly, eager as a child,  
(If like desires of innocent little ones  
May with such heinous appetites be compared),  
Pleased in some open field to exercise  
A toy that mimics with revolving wings  
The motion of a wind-mill; though the air  
Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes  
Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,  
But with the plaything at arm's length, he sets  
His front against the blast, and runs amain,  
That it may whirl the faster.

Amid the depth

Of those enormities, even thinking minds  
Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being—  
Forgot that such a sound was ever heard  
As Liberty upon earth: yet all beneath  
Her innocent authority was wrought,  
Nor could have been, without her blessed name.  
The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour  
Of her composure, felt that agony,  
And gave it vent in her last words. O Friend!  
It was a lamentable time for man,  
Whether a hope had e'er been his or not:  
A woful time for them whose hopes survived  
The shock; most woful for those few who still  
Were flattered, and had trust in human kind:  
They had the deepest feeling of the grief.  
Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved:

The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,  
And throttled with an infant godhead's might  
The snakes about her cradle; that was well,  
And as it should be; yet no cure for them  
Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be  
Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.  
Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!  
Were my day-thoughts,—my nights were miserable;  
Through months, through years, long after the last  
beat  
Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep  
To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,  
Such ghastly visions had I of despair  
And tyranny, and implements of death;  
And innocent victims sinking under fear,  
And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer,  
Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds  
For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth  
And levity in dungeons, where the dust  
Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene  
Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me  
In long orations, which I strove to plead  
Before unjust tribunals,—with a voice  
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,  
Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt  
In the last place of refuge—my own soul.

## VIII

The time of despair was long: the following passage from Book XI. describes, with the aid of a singularly beautiful simile, how his sister Dorothy helped him with her sympathy to win through to peace of mind. The "Friend" to whom the whole poem is dedicated, was Coleridge, part of whose *Lines* on the poem follow this final excerpt.

Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk  
With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge  
From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down  
In reconciliation with an utter waste  
Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook,  
(Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,  
Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward)  
But turned to abstract science, and there sought  
Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned  
Where the disturbances of space and time—  
Whether in matters various, properties  
Inherent, or from human will and power  
Derived—find no admission. Then it was—  
Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!—  
That the beloved Sister in whose sight  
Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice  
Of sudden admonition—like a brook  
That did but cross a lonely road, and now  
Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,  
Companion never lost through many a league—  
Maintained for me a saving intercourse

With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed

Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed  
 Than as a clouded and a waning moon:  
 She whispered still that brightness would return;  
 She, in the midst of all, preserved me still  
 A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,  
 And that alone, my office upon earth;  
 And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown,  
 If willing audience fail not, Nature's self,  
 By all varieties of human love  
 Assisted, led me back through opening day  
 To those sweet counsels between head and heart  
 Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with  
 peace,

Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,  
 Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now  
 In the catastrophe (for so they dream,  
 And nothing less), when, finally to close  
 And seal up all the gains of France, a Pope  
 Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor—  
 This last opprobrium, when we see a people,  
 That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven  
 For manna, take a lesson from the dog  
 Returning to his vomit; when the sun  
 That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved  
 In exultation with a living pomp  
 Of clouds—his glory's natural retinue—  
 Hath dropped all functions by the gods bestowed,  
*To crown an emperor.* Coronation of Napoleon, 1804.

And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,  
Sets like an Opera phantom.

Thus, O Friend!

Through times of honour and through times of  
shame

Descending, have I faithfully retraced  
The perturbations of a youthful mind  
Under a long-lived storm of great events—  
A story destined for thy ear, who now,  
Among the fallen of nations, dost abide  
Where Etna, over hill and valley, casts  
His shadow stretching towards Syracuse,  
The city of Timoleon! Righteous Heaven!  
How are the mighty prostrated! They first,  
They first of all that breathe should have awaked  
When the great voice was heard from out the tombs  
Of ancient heroes. If I suffered grief  
For ill-requited France, by many deemed  
A trifler only in her proudest day;  
Have been distressed to think of what she once  
Promised, now is; a far more sober cause  
Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land,  
To the reanimating influence lost  
Of memory, to virtue lost and hope,  
Though with the wreck of loftier years bestrewn.

But indignation works where hope is not,  
And thou, O Friend! wilt be refreshed. There is  
One great society alone on earth:  
The noble Living and the noble Dead.

## TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

COMPOSED ON THE NIGHT AFTER HIS RECITATION OF  
A POEM ON THE GROWTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL MIND

FRIEND of the wise! and teacher of the good!  
Into my heart I have received that lay  
More than historic, that prophetic lay  
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)  
Of the foundations and the building up  
Of a Human Spirit thou hast dared to tell  
What may be told, to the understanding mind  
Revealable; and what within the mind  
Of vital breathings secret as the soul  
Of vernal growth, oft quickens in the heart  
Thoughts all too deep for words!—

Theme hard as high,  
Of smiles spontaneous, and mysterious fears.  
(The first-born they of Reason and twin-birth),  
Of tides obedient to external force,  
And currents self-determined, as might seem,  
Or by some inner power; of moments awful,  
Now in thy inner life, and now abroad,  
When power streamed from thee, and thy soul  
received  
The light reflected, as a light bestowed—  
Of fancies fair, and milder hours of youth,  
Hyblæan murmurs of poetic thought  
Industrious in its joy, in vales and glens,

Native or outland, lakes and famous hills!  
Or only the lonely high road, when the stars  
Were rising; or by secret mountain streams,  
The guides and the companions of thy way!  
Of more than Fancy, of the Social Sense  
Distending wide, and man beloved as man,  
When France in all her towns lay vibrating  
Like some becalmèd bark beneath the burst  
Of Heaven's immediate thunder, when no cloud  
Is visible, or shadow on the main.  
For thou wert then, thine own brows garlanded,  
Amid the tremor of a realm aglow,  
Amid a mighty nation jubilant,  
When from the general heart of humankind  
Hope sprang forth like a full-blown deity!  
—Of that dear Hope afflicted and struck down,  
So summoned homeward, thenceforth calm and sure,  
From the dread watch-tower of man's absolute  
self,  
With light unwaning on her eyes, to look  
Far on—herself a glory to behold.  
The Angel of the vision! Then (last strain)  
Of Duty, chosen laws controlling choice,  
Action and joy!—An Orphic song indeed,  
A song divine of high and passionate thoughts  
To their own music chanted!

• • • • •

And when—O Friend! my comforter and guide!  
Strong in thyself, and powerful to give strength!—

Thy long sustained Song finally closed,  
And thy deep voice had ceased—yet thou thyself  
Wert still before my eyes, and round us both  
That happy vision of belovèd faces—  
Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close  
I sate, my being blended in one thought  
(Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?)  
Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound—  
And when I rose I found myself in prayer.

S. T. COLERIDGE.





## PART I

*Lines written in Early Spring.* This and the following poem are placed at the beginning of the selection because they illustrate so much of what is simplest yet most fundamental in Wordsworth: the delight in the mere fact of "fresh air": the preference for a quiet, pensive, and "idle," rather than an arduous, enjoyment of it; the sense that Nature is not mere scenery but something alive, with a soul of its own with which we can communicate, and whose "laws" we may learn to our own infinite advantage.

Matthew was, unhappily, not a simple portrait from life. Wordsworth writes, "The character had a solid foundation in fact and reality, but it was also in some degree a composition: I will not need to call it an invention—it was no such thing." Old men—Matthew, Michael, the Leech-gatherer, the Cumberland beggar—and children were the characters in whom Wordsworth most sought and found wisdom.

"*Among all lovely things my Love had been.*" I prefix this poem to the famous "Lucy" series, for, though it was written at a different date, it can hardly be accident that the same name was chosen. In *Heart-Leap* Well Wordsworth says:

The moving accident is not my trade;  
and this poem is a typical illustration in miniature of

the materials of which Wordsworth made his most impressive tales—*Michael*, for example. There are no breathless changes of fortune, from bad to good, and from good to bad; a single natural incident stirs a natural emotion, and both are described with a simplicity that neither adds nor elaborates.

*Lucy.* As with so many of Wordsworth's greatest poems, the only adequate commentary must be found in his other poems, and particularly in the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*. Lucy is retrieved by Nature and taken back to her bosom before the "Heaven" that "lies about us in our infancy" had time to "fade into the light of common day." "Dovedale" is not the well-known Derbyshire valley, but a little glen near Kirkstone Pass containing only one farm. The poems were written in Germany—"I travelled among unknown men."

*Anecdote for Fathers.* There is no doubt something ludicrous about the incident here so simply described: It is certainly not as a specimen of Wordsworth's great poetry, but as an interesting commentary on much of it, that the poem is included here. To Wordsworth, children, like Nature herself, were the trustees of a golden secret, a secret that could only be learnt by sympathy and "a wise passiveness." Such crudely direct investigations as that here described only puzzle the child and lead him to tell "fibs." See, in particular, the first few lines of Stanza VIII. of the *Ode*. The curious epithets of line four—"deaf and silent"—find an explanation in this poem.

*To H. C. Six Years Old.* H. C. is Hartley Coleridge, son of the poet and himself afterwards a lesser poet

and Wordsworth's neighbour at Rydal. The next poem describes a daughter of Wordsworth who died in childhood.

*The Sparrow's Nest.* The second verse is one of Wordsworth's many tributes to his sister Dorothy. No doubt his poetry owed to her more than the poetry of any other great English poet has owed to one not actually its author. "She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;"—in the art of quick and delicate observation, it is likely she was as gifted as Wordsworth himself. Her diaries, which have been published, are full of descriptive notes that formed the raw material of some of his best poems. That she possessed in any like equal degree with him those other gifts without which Wordsworth would not have been a great poet, there is no reason to suppose. The help she gave him here must rather have been that of sympathy and unusually complete understanding.

*To the Cuckoo.* It was Matthew Arnold in his "Selection" who first placed this and the following poem together. The dates show that they were not written as companion pieces. These are the first poems printed here in which there is a hint of that "something behind" Nature, vaguely conceived, but more indubitably real to Wordsworth, and the revelation of which was the final justification of the cult of Nature.

"*O Nightingale! Thou surely art.*" This poem has been turned against Wordsworth by his depreciators. His song is indeed, they say, that of the stock-dove; very soothing, no doubt, very wholesome, but just a little tame, lacking the mystery and the glamour of the nightingales, Shelley and Keats for instance. Possibly

the Skylark of the next poem—again contrasted with the nightingale—is, as there described, a more adequate symbol for Wordsworth.

*Yew-Trees.* I have placed this poem here as a criticism on the criticism in the previous note—an example of what Wordsworth could achieve in the way of mystery and glamour. The *Prelude* contains many more examples.

*To a Highland Girl* and *The Solitary Reaper*. These are from a set called "Memorials of a Tour in Scotland." Though each is written round a human figure, they are pure "nature poetry," for the human figure is herself made one with the loveliness around her. A comparison, if it be worth making, reveals the fact that the first recalls an appeal to the eye, the second an appeal to the ear. *The Solitary Reaper* is, in truth, a perfect poem. Conceive the poet and his companions walking along idly enough, and brought to a stand and a complete suspense by the voice. The suspense is maintained throughout the dream-like imaginings of the second and third verses. Then the spell is broken and the walk resumed. Both poems end with the reflection so characteristic of Wordsworth that these experiences are not mere transient delights but treasures durably stored in memory.

"*She was a Phantom of Delight.*" Wordsworth writes: "The germ of this poem was four lines composed as a part of the verses on the Highland Girl. Though beginning in this way, it was written from the heart, as is sufficiently obvious." The subject is in fact his wife. Wordsworth's note is not very clear, but would seem to imply that four lines of the first verse originally

belonged to *The Highland Girl*, where indeed they would be entirely appropriate.

Wordsworth wrote scarcely any love-poetry in the ordinary sense, and this poem is not so much an expression of as a meditation upon love. But surely few poets have gone deeper into the truth of the matter, and it carries us on past the love of courtship to the love of married life, a love that fills a much larger place in life, and that poets seldom treat of, and novelists only as a rule when it proves a failure.

*Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty.* The touch of pathos in this splendid poem is enhanced by the fact that it was, indeed, one of the last fully inspired outpourings of Wordsworth's genius, though he was to live another thirty-two years.

## PART II

*Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey.* This poem may be regarded as a kind of preliminary sketch of the subject of *The Prelude*. It belongs to the first year of Wordsworth's great poetry, a time otherwise mainly devoted to short and simple lyrics and ballads, and is, in effect, a retrospect of the critical years of his life. He looks back to the time of his last visit to Tintern when Nature, though not less loved, had so much less meaning for him, since he knew so much less of humanity. I must confess I always feel that the last long paragraph, with its tribute to his sister, rather weakens the total effect of the poem.

*Elegiac Stanzas, suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle.* This poem expresses in a kind of allegory the same idea as the Tintern poem. As in the former:

I have learned  
To look on nature not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still sad music of humanity;

so here:

A deep distress hath humanised my soul.

The distress, it is true, is due not so much to the wreckage of his political ideals as to the death of his brother, recently drowned at sea.

The fourth verse is often misread,

The light that never was on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the Poet's dream,

seems a perfect description of that which it is the legitimate function of Art, in the hands, for instance, of such a master as Turner, to add to Nature. Maybe: but Wordsworth's idea is that such glamour is delusion. He does not ask, of course, for a mere photographic impression of externals, but a rendering of what imagination *sees*, as distinct from a rendering of what fancy might *invent*. To avoid all misunderstanding, he altered the stanza in a later edition and wrote:

And add the gleam  
Of lustre, known to neither sea nor land,  
But borrowed from the youthful Poet's dream.

Here is no chance of mistake, but not much poetry either: and so the earlier version was by the poet himself restored.

*Lines on the Death of Fox.* Fox's politics had followed much the same course as Wordsworth's own; an

enthusiastic sympathiser with the French Revolution, and a bitter opponent of the war in its early stages, but later converted to the necessity of a life-and-death struggle with Napoleon.

*The Old Cumberland Beggar.* The obvious criticism on this poem was expressed in a letter from Charles Lamb: "It appears to me a fault that the instructions conveyed in it are too direct, and like a lecture: they do not slide into the mind of the reader while he is imagining no such matter." At the same time he praises "the delicate and curious feeling in the wish for the Beggar that he may have about him the melody of birds although he hears them not."

Of the fragment that follows Wordsworth records what the reader would in any case guess, that it was "an overflowing from *The Old Cumberland Beggar*."

*Resolution and Independence.* Dr. A. C. Bradley speaks of this as "probably, if we must choose, the most Wordsworthian of Wordsworth's poems, and the best test of ability to understand him." On the surface all is commonplace enough, but the old leech-gatherer produces on the poet an almost uncanny impression of sublimity, and the reader must judge how much of the effect is reproduced upon himself. Notice only the similes. The leech-gatherer appears like "a huge stone," like "a sea-beast crawled forth," "motionless as a cloud": his voice is "like a stream scarce heard"; and the poet is "troubled," as by something from another world: he is aware of those

Blank misgivings of a Creature  
Moving about in worlds not realised,  
High instincts before which our mortal Nature  
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised.

The commentary, as so often, is in the *Ode*, Stanza IX. Other striking examples of this same mood of use are to be found in the selections from *The Prelude*.

The second poet referred to in Stanza VII. is Burns, the last years of whose short life were full of misery.

*Ode to Duty*. Thomas Hardy criticised this poem as "somewhat astringent," but he must have forgotten the last stanza but one. That stanza, which is, of course, the best, illustrates in its extremest form Wordsworth's feeling that there is one Law for mankind and also for what we call inanimate nature. See also, for the same feeling, the Sonnet on Toussaint L'Ouverture.

*Michael*. The greatest of Wordsworth's "tragedies." Notice that he makes nothing of what would probably have been selected by the ordinary story-teller as the opportunity of introducing suspense and excitement, the anxious waiting for the son's letters and the alternations of hope and fear. The pathos of the end is, as has been remarked, the bare, unrelieved, unsentimentalised pathos of the end of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Matthew Arnold picked out as the typical example of Wordsworth's peculiar powers in blank verse, the line:

And never lifted up a single stone.

Of this and other tales Walter Pater wrote, "A sort of biblical depth and solemnity hangs over this strange, new, passionate, pastoral world, of which he first raised the image, and the reflection of which some of our best modern fiction has caught from him."

"*Action is transitory.*" This is a fragment from Wordsworth's early tragedy *The Borderers*, selected

by himself to be placed at the beginning of *The White Doe of Rylstone*, a tale of heroic passive endurance.

"Calm is all Nature as a Resting Wheel." This, alone of the poems in this book, was written in youth, before the visit to France. In later years Wordsworth wrote more sonnets than any other great English poet, and he tells us that the form was suggested to him by a reading in 1802 of the sonnets of Milton, a fact which gives added interest to the sonnet on page 138,

Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour,  
which is, no doubt, the noblest tribute ever paid by  
one English poet to another.

*On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway.*  
I do not pretend that this sonnet is worthy to rank  
beside

Earth hath not anything to show more fair,  
or

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,  
or

The World is too much with us.

These are among the greatest poetry in the language. The "Railway Sonnet" I insert, partly as a pleasing specimen of the poet in extreme old age, but still more as linking the end of Wordsworth's days with the beginning of our own.

*Ode : Intimations of Immortality.* A brief analysis will help some readers, and can be ignored by those who do not need it.

I.-IV. Something has been lost: Nature, though externally as lovely as ever, no longer inspires the poet

as it once did. The shout of a shepherd-boy momentarily restores the vision, but only momentarily. What is it that is lost?

V. The explanation: we bring with us at birth something from another world, and this we gradually lose as we grow to manhood.

VI.-VIII. Earth (not to be confused with "Nature") becomes the Nurse of the heaven-born child, who grows intent upon all that lies before him and forgetful of all that lies behind.

IX.-XI. And yet something of the heavenly "memory" remains with us, something that, if we will but value and cherish it, will colour all life for us, and be our inspiration.

The poem gathers up in a single Confession of Faith what is implicit in many of the greater poems. Stanza IX., leading up to its magnificent climax in the long six-foot line, is the quintessence of Wordsworth.

The idea of immortality before birth, and inspiration as a form of "memory," is to be found in Plato, and the great speech upon it in the *Phædrus* is, even in an English translation, one of the glories of all literature. But there is no reason for thinking that Wordsworth was consciously following Plato. He was setting forth an allegorical explanation of what he found in his own experience.

## PART III

This small group may perhaps be dealt with as a whole. They are taken from a series collected together by Wordsworth under the title "Poems dedicated to National Liberty and Independence." In the original they cover the whole period from the Peace of Amiens to the final victory, and conclude with a very uninspired *Ode on The Morning of the Day appointed for a General Thanksgiving, January 18, 1816*—seven months, that is, after Waterloo.

It will be noticed that all but one of this selection fall within the first five years, and even that dated 1811 is a forecast of victory, based upon the success of the Spanish guerilla warfare, rather than a celebration of it. The actual victory-poems are distressing productions. No doubt the explanation partly lies in the decay of Wordsworth's own powers, which may be dated from about 1807. But victory is a trying subject, and it yet remains to be seen whether our contemporary poets have produced or will produce anything on our victory in the Great War, worthy to be set beside the best poems commemorating the earlier years of apparently almost hopeless carnage.

Several of the Sonnets, be it noticed, dwell rather on the shortcomings of England than on her military prowess or the wickedness of her enemies. Even so, during the late war, were all who were not blinded by militarist passions driven to probe the weaknesses of their own country, and to pray that we might be more worthy of the cause entrusted to us.

The earlier part of the story, Wordsworth's attitude ten years earlier to the French Revolution and our war

against it, will be found in the later selections from *The Prelude* in Part IV. It is a story in strange contrast with what we have here. It gives some food for thought to reflect that the writer of our noblest war poetry would fairly certainly have been haled off to prison as a "conscientious objector," had the laws of 1916 been introduced when England went to war in 1793. I do not think that anyone who studies Wordsworth's account in *The Prelude* can doubt that that would have been his fate.

Wordsworth never admitted that he changed his view of the policy of 1793. It was the circumstances that changed. In the advent of Napoleonic Imperialism Wordsworth found England's justification.

*The Venetian Republic* had been partitioned between Napoleon and Austria at Campo Formio in 1797.

*Toussaint L'Ouverture* was a negro chieftain in San Domingo. The English and French fought for the island, and, as the French Republic proclaimed the abolition of slavery, he came to their aid, and being appointed general of the French forces, helped to drive the English out, and became governor of the island. In 1801 Napoleon re-established slavery: Toussaint rebelled, was arrested and sent to Paris, where he died after ten days' imprisonment. He was alive in prison when Wordsworth wrote.

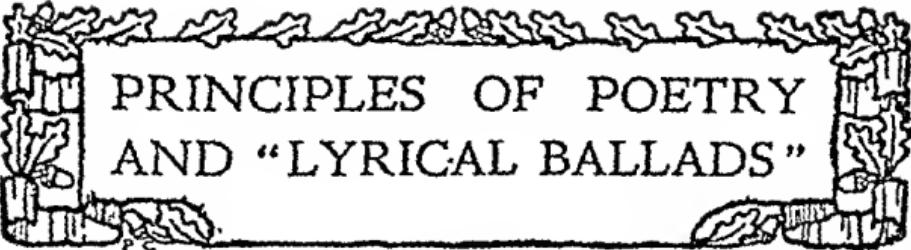
*November 1806* commemorates the utter collapse of Prussia by the surrender of all her fortresses after the defeat of Jena. The forecast that we should be "left alone" was fulfilled when Russia made peace and a close alliance with France at Tilsit in July, 1807.



THE following questions may be used as essay subjects, but they are intended primarily to guide the reader's attention and provide food for thought and study.

1. What evidence is there that Wordsworth was an accurate observer of nature as well as a lover of it? The two things do not always go together.
2. Notice Wordsworth's similes. They are usually brief and thus inconspicuous, but also strikingly original and vivid. To what, for instance, is Matthew, after death, compared; or the evening air on Calais sands; or the ice under the skater's foot?
3. Wordsworth writes: "It may be safely affirmed that there neither is nor can be any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." Is this true? Is Wordsworth's poetry consistent with the ideal implied? What does he mean by "*essential*" (which is underlined in the original)?
4. What would seem to be Wordsworth's religion? —*i.e.*, what are his ideas of God, human nature, death, and immortality?
5. Wordsworth held that though we lost something as we passed from childhood to manhood, we also gained something: what? See particularly the first two and last poems in Part II., and the selections from *The Prelude*.
6. What was the substance of Wordsworth's indictment of "civilisation"?

7. What does Wordsworth seem to have hoped for from the French Revolution?
8. Suppose society became "Wordsworthian" by conviction—what would happen? This test might be applied to other poets—but can it be applied to all of them?
9. Perhaps the best way of setting about "summing up" Wordsworth's poetic message is to take the "Immortality" Ode and annotate it by a series of references to all the other poems or fragments of poems that illustrate, amplify, or recall any particular passage in it. You will not be able to bring all the poems into this scheme, but a great many, and for those to whom this appeals, the *Ode* is reprinted at the end of the book with alternate blank leaves.
10. It may be maintained, however, that this indexing is a work of art of sacrilege: that a poet should not be treated as if he were a philosopher: that each poem is a work of art entirely to itself, to be judged without reference to any external context: that, in fact, comparisons are odious. There is something to be said for this view.
11. Read Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*. How does it compare with *Michael*?
12. Compare the "nature poetry" of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, as regards choice of subject and treatment.
13. "Wordsworth's sonnets derive from Milton, as Keats' from Shakespeare": this might be investigated.



## PRINCIPLES OF POETRY AND "LYRICAL BALLADS"

"LYRICAL BALLADS" was first published in 1798 and contained poems both by Wordsworth and Coleridge. In later years Coleridge gave the following account of the terms of the partnership. "It was agreed," he says, "that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment that constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the super-

"The mind's attention from the lethargy  
it to the loveliness and the wonders  
an inexhaustible treasure; but for

which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand."

Coleridge's contributions included *The Ancient Mariner*.

The arguments of the Preface from the second edition here printed (which is wholly Wordsworth's) are discussed and in some cases refuted in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.

THE first Volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the

probable effect of those Poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure: and, on the other hand, I was well aware, that by those who should dislike them, they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please.

Several of my Friends are anxious for the success of these Poems, from a belief, that, if the views with which they were composed were indeed realised, a class of Poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the quality, and in the multiplicity of its moral relations: and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory upon which the Poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, knowing that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular Poems: and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because, adequately to display the opinions, and fully to enforce the arguments, would require a space wholly disproportionate to a preface. For, to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence of which it is susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste

in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined without pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each other, and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defence; yet I am sensible, that there would be something like impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed.

It is supposed, that by the act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association; that he not only thus apprises the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations: for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius, and that of Statius or Claudian; and in our country, in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher, and that of Donne and Cowley, or Dryden, or Pope. I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which, by the act of writing in verse, an Author in the present day makes to his reader: but it will undoubtedly appear to many persons that I have not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. They who have been

accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. I hope therefore the reader will not censure me for attempting to state what I have proposed to myself to perform; and also (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose: that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from one of the most dishonourable accusations which can be brought against an Author; namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it.

The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as

regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of Nature. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour

upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation.<sup>1</sup>

I cannot, however, be insensible to the present outcry against the triviality and meanness, both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge that this defect, where it exists, is more dishonourable to the Writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time, that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived; but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings, that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If this opinion be erroneous, I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of

<sup>1</sup> It is worth while here to observe, that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day.

subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.

It has been said that each of these poems has a purpose. Another circumstance must be mentioned which distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day; it is this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling.

A sense of false modesty shall not prevent me from asserting, that the Reader's attention is pointed to this mark of distinction, far less for the sake of these particular Poems than from the general importance of the subject. The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants;

and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged; but this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unsuiting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.—When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble endeavour made in these volumes to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no

dishonourable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible; and were there not added to this impression a belief, that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed, by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success.

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these Poems, I shall request the Reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their *style*, in order, among other reasons, that he may not censure me for not having performed what I never attempted. The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected, as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which Writers in metre seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep the Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. Others who pursue a different track will interest him likewise; I do not interfere with

their claim, but wish to prefer a claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it; this has been done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men; and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart, is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. Without being culpably particular, I do not know how to give my Reader a more exact notion of the style in which it was my wish and intention to write, than by informing him that I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject; consequently, there is I hope in these Poems little falsehood of description, and my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something must have been gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely, good sense: but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad Poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to over-power.

If in a poem there should be found a series of

lines, or even a single line, in which the language, though naturally arranged, and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics, who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms, as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the Reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove to him, that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself. To illustrate the subject in a general manner, I will here adduce a short composition of Gray, who was at the head of those who, by their reasonings, have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction.

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,  
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire:  
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,  
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.

These cars, alas! for other notes repine;  
*A different object do these eyes require;*  
*My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;*  
*And in my breast the imperfect joys expire;*  
 Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,  
 And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;  
 The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;  
 To warm their little loves the birds complain.  
*I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,*  
*And weep the more because I weep in vain.*

It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in Italics; it is equally obvious, that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word "fruitless" for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.

By the foregoing quotation it has been shown that the language of Prose may yet be well adapted to Poetry; and it was previously asserted, that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good Prose. We will go further. It may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and, accordingly, we call them Sisters: but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred, and almost identical.

not necessarily differing even in degree; Poetry<sup>1</sup> sheds no tears "such as Angels weep," but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.

If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which overturns what has just been said on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose, and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the language of such Poetry as is here recommended is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and, if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. What other distinction would we have? Whence is it to

<sup>1</sup> I here use the word "Poetry" (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable.

come? And where is it to exist? Not, surely, where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters: it cannot be necessary here, either for elevation of style, or any of its supposed ornaments: for, if the Poet's subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures. I forbear to speak of an incongruity which would shock the intelligent Reader, should the Poet interweave any foreign splendour of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests: it is sufficient to say that such addition is unnecessary. And, surely, it is more probable that those passages, which with propriety abound with metaphors and figures, will have their due effect, if, upon other occasions where the passions are of a milder character, the style also be subdued and temperate.

But, as the pleasure which I hope to give by the Poems now presented to the Reader must depend entirely on just notions upon this subject, and, as it is in itself of high importance to our taste and moral feelings, I cannot content myself with these detached remarks. And if, in what I am about to say, it shall appear to some that my labour is unnecessary, and that I am like a man fighting a battle without enemies, such persons may be reminded, that, whatever be the language outwardly holden by men, a practical faith in the opinions which I am wishing to establish is almost unknown. If my conclusions

are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried if admitted at all, our judgments concerning the works of the greatest Poets both ancient and modern will be far different from what they are at present, both when we praise, and when we censure: and our moral feelings influencing and influenced by these judgments will, I believe, be corrected and purified.

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, let me ask, what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?—He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from

the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves:—whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

But whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest Poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt that the language which it will suggest to him, must often, in liveliness and truth, fall short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the Poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself.

However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet, it is obvious, that while he describes and imitates passions, his employment is in some degree mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here, then, he will apply the principle of selection which has been already insisted upon. He will depend upon this for removing what

would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion; he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature: and, the more industriously he applies this principle, the deeper will be his faith that no words, which *his* fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who does not scruple to substitute excellencies of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavours occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its

own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere, because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure: I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathise with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle

## TO "LYRICAL BALLADS"

combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The Man of science, the Chemist and Mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure, and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions, lie considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding every where objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the Poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most

interesting properties of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure, which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature, with affections akin to those, which, through labour and length of time, the Man of science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude. the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying every where with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs: in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and

knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are every where; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of Men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.—It is not, then, to be supposed

that any one, who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments, and endeavour to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

What has been thus far said applies to Poetry in general; but especially to those parts of composition where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters; and upon this point it appears to authorise the conclusion that there are few persons of good sense, who would not allow that the dramatic parts of composition are defective, in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature, and are coloured by a diction of the Poet's own, either peculiar to him as an individual Poet or belonging simply to Poets in general; to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their composition being in metre, it is expected will employ a particular language.

It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for this distinction of language; but still it may be proper and necessary where the Poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer by referring the Reader to the description before given of a Poet. Among the qualities there enumerated as principally conducing to form a Poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what was said is, that the Poet is chiefly distin-

guished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the Poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case, the Poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. Unless therefore we are advocates for that admiration which subsists upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the Poet must descend from this supposed height; and, in order to excite rational

sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. To this it may be added, that while he is only selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is treading upon safe ground, and we know what we are to expect from him. Our feelings are the same with respect to metre; for, as it may be proper to remind the Reader, the distinction of metre is regular and uniform, and not, like that which is produced by what is usually called **POETIC DICTION**, arbitrary, and subject to infinite caprices, upon which no calculation whatever can be made. In the one case, the Reader is utterly at the mercy of the Poet, respecting what imagery or diction he may choose to connect with the passion; whereas, in the other, the metre obeys certain laws, to which the Poet and Reader both willingly submit because they are certain, and because no interference is made by them with the passion but such as the concurring testimony of ages has shown to heighten and improve the pleasure which co-exists with it.

It will now be proper to answer an obvious question, namely, Why, professing these opinions, have I written in verse? To this, in addition to such answer as is included in what has been already said, I reply, in the first place, Because, however I may have restricted myself, there is still left open to me what confessedly constitutes the most valuable object of all writing, whether in prose or verse; the great and universal passions of men, the most general and

interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature before me—to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery. Now, supposing for a moment that whatever is interesting in these objects may be as vividly described in prose, why should I be condemned for attempting to superadd to such description, the charm which, by the consent of all nations, is acknowledged to exist in metrical language? To this, by such as are yet unconvinced, it may be answered that a very small part of the pleasure given by Poetry depends upon the metre, and that it is injudicious to write in metre, unless it be accompanied with the other artificial distinctions of style with which metre is usually accompanied, and that, by such deviation, more will be lost from the shock which will thereby be given to the Reader's associations than will be counterbalanced by any pleasure which he can derive from the general power of numbers. In answer to those who still contend for the necessity of accompanying metre with certain appropriate colours of style in order to the accomplishment of its appropriate end, and who also, in my opinion, greatly under-rate the power of metre in itself, it might, perhaps, as far as relates to these Volumes, have been almost sufficient to observe, that poems are extant, written upon more humble subjects, and in a still more naked and simple style, which have continued to give pleasure from generation to generation. Now, if nakedness and simplicity be a defect, the fact here mentioned affords a strong presumption that poems somewhat less naked and

simple are capable of affording pleasure at the present day; and, what I wished *chiefly* to attempt, at present, was to justify myself for having written under the impression of this belief.

But various causes might be pointed out why, when the style is manly, and the subject of some importance, words metrically arranged will long continue to impart such a pleasure to mankind as he who proves the extent of that pleasure will be desirous to impart. The end of Poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure; but, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not, in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order. If the words, however, by which this excitement is produced be in themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling, and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion. This is unquestionably true; and hence, though the opinion will at first appear paradoxical, from the tendency of metre to divest language, in a certain degree, of its reality, and thus to throw a sort of half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole

composition, there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them, may be endured in metrical composition, especially in rhyme, than in prose. The metre of the old ballads is very artless; yet they contain many passages which would illustrate this opinion; and I hope, if the following Poems be attentively perused, similar instances will be found in them. This opinion may be further illustrated by appealing to the Reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the re-perusal of the distressful parts of *Clarissa Harlowe*, or the *Gammer*; while Shakespeare's writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon us, as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure—an effect which, in a much greater degree than might at first be imagined, is to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement.—On the other hand (what it must be allowed will much more frequently happen) if the Poet's words should be incommensurate with the passion, and inadequate to raise the Reader to a height of desirable excitement, then (unless the Poet's choice of his metre has been grossly injudicious), in the feelings of pleasure which the Reader has been accustomed to connect with metre in general, and in the feeling, whether cheerful or melancholy, which he has been accustomed to connect with that particular movement of metre, there will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart passion to the

words, and to effect the complex end which the Poet proposes to himself.

If I had undertaken a SYSTEMATIC defence of the theory here maintained, it would have been my duty to develop the various causes upon which the pleasure received from metrical language depends. Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must be well known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of accurate reflection; namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds, and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the passions connected with it, take their origin: it is the life of our ordinary conversation; and upon the accuracy with which similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude are perceived, depend our tastes and our moral feelings. It would not be a useless employment to apply this principle to the consideration of metre, and to show that metre is hence enabled to afford much pleasure, and to point out in what manner that pleasure is produced. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon this subject, and I must content myself with a general summary.

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to

that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that, whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely—all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the Poet manages his numbers are them-

selves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the Reader. All that it is *necessary* to say, however, upon this subject, may be effected by affirming, what few persons will deny, that, of two descriptions, either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once.

Having thus explained a few of my reasons for writing in verse, and why I have chosen subjects from common life, and endeavoured to bring my language near to the real language of men, if I have been too minute in pleading my own cause, I have at the same time been treating a subject of general interest; and for this reason a few words shall be added with reference solely to these particular poems, and to some defects which will probably be found in them. I am sensible that my associations must have sometimes been particular instead of general, and that, consequently, giving to things a false importance, I may have sometimes written upon unworthy subjects; but I am less apprehensive on this account, than that my language may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases, from which no man can altogether protect himself. Hence I have no doubt, that, in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to my Readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic. Such faulty expressions, were I convinced they were faulty

at present, and that they must necessarily continue to be so, I would willingly take all reasonable pains to correct. But it is dangerous to make these alterations on the simple authority of a few individuals, or even of certain classes of men; for where the understanding of an Author is not convinced, or his feelings altered, this cannot be done without great injury to himself: for his own feelings are his stay and support; and, if he set them aside in one instance, he may be induced to repeat this act till his mind shall lose all confidence in itself, and become utterly debilitated. To this it may be added, that the Critic ought never to forget that he is himself exposed to the same errors as the Poet, and, perhaps, in a much greater degree: for there can be no presumption in saying of most readers, that it is not probable they will be so well acquainted with the various stages of meaning through which words have passed, or with the fickleness or stability of the relations of particular ideas to each other; and, above all, since they are so much less interested in the subject, they may decide lightly and carelessly.

Long as the Reader has been detained, I hope he will permit me to caution him against a mode of false criticism which has been applied to Poetry, in which the language closely resembles that of life and nature. Such verses have been triumphed over in parodies, of which Dr. Johnson's stanza is a fair specimen:

I put my hat upon my head  
And walked into the Strand,  
And there I met another man  
Whose hat was in his hand.

Immediately under these lines let us place one of the most justly-admired stanzas of the *Babes in the Wood*.

These pretty Babes with hand in hand  
Went wandering up and down;  
But never more they saw the Man  
Approaching from the Town.

In both these stanzas the words, and the order of the words, in no respect differ from the most unimpassioned conversation. There are words in both, for example, "the Strand," and "the Town," connected with none but the most familiar ideas; yet the one stanza we admit as admirable, and the other as a fair example of the superlatively contemptible. Whence arises this difference? Not from the metre, not from the language, not from the order of the words; but the *matter* expressed in Dr. Johnson's stanza is contemptible. The proper method of treating trivial and simple verses, to which Dr. Johnson's stanza would be a fair parallelism, is not to say, this is a bad kind of poetry, or, this is not poetry; but, this wants sense; it is neither interesting in itself, nor can *lead* to any thing interesting; the images neither originate in that sane state of feeling which arises out of thought, nor can excite thought or feeling in the Reader. This is the only sensible manner of dealing with such verses. Why trouble yourself about the species till you have previously decided upon the genus? Why take pains to prove that an ape is not a Newton, when it is self-evident that he is not a man?

One request I must make of my reader, which is,

that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others. How common is it to hear a person say, I myself do not object to this style of composition, or this or that expression, but, to such and such classes of people it will appear mean or ludicrous! This mode of criticism, so destructive of all sound unadulterated judgment, is almost universal: let the Reader then abide, independently, by his own feelings, and, if he finds himself affected, let him not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure.

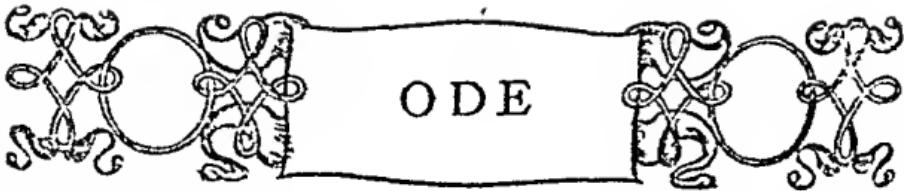
If an Author, by any single composition, has impressed us with respect for his talents, it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption, that on other occasions where we have been displeased, he, nevertheless, may not have written ill or absurdly; and further, to give him so much credit for this one composition as may induce us to review what has displeased us, with more care than we should otherwise have bestowed upon it. This is not only an act of justice, but, in our decisions upon poetry especially, may conduce, in a high degree, to the improvement of our own taste: for an *accurate* taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an *acquired* talent, which can only be produced by thought and a long-continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned, not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced Reader from judging for himself (I have already said that I

wish him to judge for himself); but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest, that, if Poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgment may be erroneous; and that, in many cases, it necessarily will be so.

Nothing would, I know, have so effectually contributed to further the end which I have in view, as to have shown of what kind the pleasure is, and how that pleasure is produced, which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from that which I have here endeavoured to recommend: for the Reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition; and what more can be done for him? The power of any art is limited; and he will suspect, that, if it be proposed to furnish him with new friends, that can be only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the Reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition, composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of Poetry; and all men feel an habitual gratitude, and something of an honourable bigotry, for the objects which have long continued to please them: we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is in these feelings enough to resist a host of arguments; and I should be the less able to combat them successfully, as I am willing to allow, that, in order entirely to enjoy the Poetry which I am recommending, it would be necessary to give up much of what is

ordinarily enjoyed. But, would my limits have permitted me to point out how this pleasure is produced, many obstacles might have been removed, and the Reader assisted in perceiving that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose; and that it is possible for Poetry to give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature. This part of the subject has not been altogether neglected, but it has not been so much my present aim to prove, that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less vivid, and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind, as to offer reasons for presuming, that if my purpose were fulfilled, a species of poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry; in its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the Poems, the Reader will be able clearly to perceive the object which I had in view: he will determine how far it has been attained; and, what is a much more important question, whether it be worth attaining: and upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the Public.



## ODE

### INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

#### I

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem

Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—

Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

#### II

The Rainbow comes and goes,  
And lovely is the Rose,  
The Moon doth with delight  
Look round her when the heavens are bare,  
Waters on a starry night  
Are beautiful and fair;  
The sunshine is a glorious birth;  
But yet I know, where'er I go,  
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

#### III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,  
And while the young lambs bound  
As to the tabor's sound,

To me alone there came a thought of grief:  
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,

And I again am strong:

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;  
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;  
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,  
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

And all the earth is gay;

Land and sea

Give themselves up to jollity,

And with the heart of May

Doth every Beast keep holiday;—

Thou Child of Joy,

Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy

Shepherd-boy!

## IV

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call

Ye to each other make; I see

The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;

My heart is at your festival,

My head hath its coronal,

The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.

Oh evil day! if I were sullen

While Earth herself is adorning,

This sweet May-morning,

And the Children are culling

On every side,

In a thousand valleys far and wide,

Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,

And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm:—

I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!

—But there's a Tree, of many, one,

A single Field which I have looked upon,  
 Both of them speak of something that is gone:  
     The Pansy at my feet  
     Doth the same tale repeat:  
 Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
 Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

## V .

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
     Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
     And cometh from afar:  
     Not in entire forgetfulness,  
     And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
     From God, who is our home:  
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
     Upon the growing Boy,  
 But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
     He sees it in his joy;  
 The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
     Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
     And by the vision splendid  
     Is on his way attended;  
 At length the Man perceives it die away,  
 And fade into the light of common day.

## VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;  
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
 And, even with something of a Mother's mind,  
     And no unworthy aim,

## ODE

The homely Nurse doth all she can  
 To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,  
 Forget the glories he hath known,  
 And that imperial palace whence he came.

## VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,  
 A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!  
 See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,  
 Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,  
 With light upon him from his father's eyes!  
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,  
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,  
 Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;

A wedding or a festival,

A mourning or a funeral;

And this hath now his heart,

And unto this he frames his song:

Then will he fit his tongue

To dialogues of business, love, or strife;

But it will not be long

Ere this be thrown aside,

And with new joy and pride

The little Actor cons another part;

Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"

With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,

That Life brings with her in her equipage;

As if his whole vocation

Were endless imitation.

## VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
 Thy Soul's immensity;  
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep

Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,  
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—

Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!

On whom those truths do rest,  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;  
Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,  
A Presence which is not to be put by;  
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might  
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?  
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

## IX

O joy! that in our embers  
Is something that doth live,  
That nature yet remembers  
What was so fugitive!

The thought of our past years in me doth breed  
Perpetual benediction: not indeed  
For that which is most worthy to be blest—  
Delight and liberty, the simple creed  
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,  
With new-sledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—  
Not for these I raise  
The song of thanks and praise;

## ODE

But for those obstinate questioning  
 Of sense and outward things,  
 Fallings from us, vanishings,  
 Blank misgivings of a Creature  
 Moving about in worlds not realised,  
 High instincts before which our mortal Nature  
 Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:

But for those first affections,

Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may,  
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,  
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing,

Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
 Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,

To perish never,

Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,  
 Nor Man nor Boy,

Nor all that is at enmity with joy,  
 Can utterly abolish or destroy'

Hence in a season of calm weather

Though inland far we be,

Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea

Which brought us hither,

Can in a moment travel thither,

And see the Children sport upon the shore,  
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore

## X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song'

And let the young Lambs bound

As to the tabor's sound'

We in thought will join your throng,

Ye that pipe and ye that play,

Ye that through your hearts to-day  
 Feel the gladness of the May!  
 What though the radiance which was once so bright  
 Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
 Though nothing can bring back the hour  
 Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;  
 We will grieve not, rather find  
 Strength in what remains behind;  
 In the primal sympathy  
 Which having been must ever be;  
 In the soothing thoughts that spring  
 Out of human suffering;  
 In the faith that looks through death,  
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

## xi

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,  
 Forebode not any severing of our loves!  
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;  
 I only have relinquished one delight  
 To live beneath your more habitual sway.  
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,  
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;  
 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day  
 Is lovely yet;  
 The Clouds that gather round the setting sun  
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;  
 Another race hath been, and other palms are won.  
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

